INFLUENCE OF OVERSEAS TRAVEL EXPERIENCES ON THE WORLDVIEWS OF U.S. BACKPACKERS

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INFLUENCE OF OVERSEAS TRAVEL EXPERIENCES ON THE WORLDVIEWS OF U.S. BACKPACKERS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management

by
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December 2008

Accepted by:
Dr. William Norman, Committee Chair
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Dr. Christa Smith
Dr. Greg Hawkins
ABSTRACT

Backpacking as a type of overseas travel has become a global phenomenon represented by people of various nationalities forming a postmodern dynamic, nomadic global community of travelers influencing, and being influenced by, each other and the locales in which they visit. Typically associated with overseas budget travel, backpacking has become an important component of global travel and tourism. However, research on backpackers from the United States have not been well represented in the travel and tourism literature. Recent publication has called for research to be conducted on backpackers originating from around the world including the United States. This dissertation addresses the issue. The purpose of this study was to explore the process through which worldviews were perceived to be influenced through the overseas travel experiences of backpackers from the United States. Grounded theory was used in answering the question of how are the worldviews of backpackers from the United States perceived to be influenced through their travel experiences because it is designed to understand processes of which little existing knowledge exists. The dissertation provides the process at both descriptive and conceptual levels. In-depth interviews of 22 individuals from the United States were conducted covering their travel careers, the planning of their journeys, the journey itself, and the return home. Throughout their journeys participants perceived that their worldviews were influenced by their experiences and this dissertation identified the process through which their worldviews were perceived to have been influenced. Freedom was the core emergent category that all other concepts and categories were drawn back to. Freedom from society, freedom to
take risks, freedom to explore the unknown, freedom to be mobile, and the freedom to become aware of other worldviews were all at the core of the backpacking experience. Influencing of worldviews was perceived to be the result of freedom to travel in an unstructured manner requiring risk, openness, mobility, discomfort, dependency, time, patience, and vulnerability. The backpacking experiences of the participants occurred through freedom from societal constraints empowering them to take risks leading to opportunities for interactions leading to awareness of others worldviews. Through awareness of others worldviews the participants became conscious of their own worldviews through exposure to differences and similarities. Interactions with local residents and fellow backpackers challenged their existing worldviews creating a level of awareness they deemed would not have existed without those experiences. The results are limited to the participants and cannot be generalized to the general backpacker population or the backpackers from the United States. The contribution of this dissertation is three-fold: a.) it contributes to understanding the process of influencing worldviews through backpacking, b.) it creates transparency of the backpacking experience by backpackers from the United States, c.) the dissertation provides a base from which future backpacker studies focusing on backpackers from the United States can be instigated. The dissertation indicated that backpackers from the United States originate from a unique socio-cultural environment that is perceived to influence their journeys as well as their worldviews.
DEDICATION

To my father, mother, Julie, and all of those who provided guidance and support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gratitude goes to my parents who graciously supported me in more ways than they will ever know. Your support throughout the years, and especially the last year of writing could never have been accomplished with your help and loving support.

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Appreciation goes out to all of the participants who shared their experiences. You are an inspiration to us all. It is my wish that your stories create a transparency of the backpacking journey and that it influences others to partake in such journeys.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who supported me over the past seven years. It has been a long journey who without many of you this would never have come to fruition.

Thank you to the committee for sticking with me through the process: Dr. William Norman, Dr. Wesley Burnett, Dr. Christa Smith, and Dr. Greg Hawkins.

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To all of the backpackers I have had the pleasure of meeting on the road…keep the spirit.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Travel is an integral part of modern day society. It empowers travelers to contribute to greater understanding between differing nationalities (Mings, 1988) while alternatively creating opportunities for misunderstanding. Misunderstanding between nationalities while traveling may result from a lack of cultural sensitivity, disregard for social norms, or a generalized ambivalence to existing differences. Backpacking is a type of peripheral, or outside the norm, travel participated in by a minority of travelers worldwide. It is characterized by travelers encountering cross-cultural interactions that many mass tourists are immune to by default of their type of travel. The defining of backpackers is challenged throughout the literature without a clear consensus on what constitutes a backpacker. The most commonly cited definition is by Pearce (1990) who identified the backpackers to have a preference for budget style accommodation, reject rigid timetables, travel for relatively long periods of time, place emphasis on socialization, and have a desire for adventurous participation in a range of opportunities. Overseas travelers in general are aligned with mass tourism and are typically characterized by their pre-choreographed experiences designed to buffer them from the harsh realities that may be encountered by other types of travelers, such as the backpackers. This buffer may also contribute to a lack of immersion into communities and exposure to local cross-cultural experiences that are consistently identified in the literature as part of the backpacker experience.
The backpacking community is a multicultural mobile community exposing members to cross-cultural experiences on a daily basis. However, how these experiences affect the traveler and their worldviews is little understood. Continuous exposure to varying cultures, landscapes, and worldviews may challenge, reinforce, or alter pre-existing worldviews. The unique backpacking milieu creates opportunities for influencing worldviews and this dissertation is focused on discerning the process through which worldviews are influenced and the outcomes thereof.

In 1958 the semi-fictional book *The Ugly American* by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick was published bringing to the forefront problems associated with real or perceived ethnocentrism, arrogance, isolationism, and lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of Americans overseas. Issues raised in the book reflect some of the same issues fueling present-day international anti-American sentiment (Joffe, 2006; Kohut & Stokes, 2007). The Pew Global Attitudes Project (2007) facilitators began investigating global attitudes towards the United States in 2002. Under the guidance of the Princeton Survey Research Associates Institution, 45,239 interviews were conducted in forty-seven countries in 2007, an increase over the forty-four nations representing 38,263 participants in their initial survey conducted in 2002. In 23 of the 33 countries where trends were available, the opinion of Americans decreased. The 2007 survey indicated an increasing dislike of the values, ideas, and customs associated with Americans, albeit several countries indicated stable impressions including Canada and Japan. The questions posed in the interviews separated opinions of the United States from opinions of its citizens yet
a relationship was shown to exist between American foreign policy, its diffusion of values, its leadership and the citizens representing the country and its power structure.

The United States is changing as the effects of globalization influence much of society. As the country becomes increasingly interconnected with institutions throughout the world, the need for culturally knowledgeable and sensitive workers is needed. Blinder (2008) argues that globalization may be leading the United States down the path to isolationism as many in the United States are seemingly ill-prepared or ignorant of the fact that the trajectory of globalization is inevitably leading to unchartered territories which the United States citizen is generally unprepared to respond to. As Chen and Starosta (1997) stated, those working in international careers must be skilled to work in and with foreign cognitive, affective, and behavioral contexts. They indicate that cross-cultural communications are learned through intellectual, emotional, and experiential learning. Although their research was based on managers preparing for work overseas, it is argued here that globalization represents a globally inter-connected world in which cross-cultural communication with foreign environs is a necessary component of the overall business environment. It is argued this new world paradigm requires a global perspective and skills in cross-cultural communication that cannot be dictated solely through classroom teaching but must be accompanied by physical exposure to overseas experiences that challenge socio-culturally based perspectives (O’Sullivan, 1996). The backpacking experience offers one opportunity through which the acquisition of cross-cultural skills and global understanding through the expansion of worldviews may occur.
Prolonged absence from the backpacker’s home society provides an opportunity to reflect upon a person’s home country as well as that of other countries while garnering the skills to navigate cross-cultural situations. Backpacking offers a means through which to explore the world, yet in the United States, there is seemingly little knowledge nor participation in the practice. Societal priorities and pressures coupled with awareness of backpacking are potential variables influencing the low participation rates. The lack of studies focusing on backpackers from the United States and their apparent under-representation in existing backpacker studies is addressed in this dissertation through exploring the perceived influences of their travel experiences on their worldviews. This requires defining, describing, and understanding the experiences through which they navigate resulting in dual outcomes: identification of the process through which their worldviews are perceived to be influenced as well as the outcomes of their journeys. The journey in this dissertation is defined as beginning at the awareness stage in which the participant decided to backpack until the time of closure.

1.1 Backpacker Research: The Growth Stage

Backpacking is a travel style previously relegated to the periphery of the tourism industry (Cohen, 1973) yet is emerging as an institutionalized (Hampton, 1998; Noy, 2006) and popular form of travel (Huxley, 2004). The increase in backpacking as a form of travel is spawning “a mobile subculture of international travelers” (Westerhausen & Macbeth, 2003, p.73) and in the process has become a metaphor for globalization. “Over the last decade, backpacker travel has appeared as representative of a travel lifestyle, an
expression of consumer identity, as well as a coherent cultural form and industrial complex” (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005, p.176).

Backpacking as a travel style has been given scant attention by researchers in the past, it currently lags behind in relation to other tourism research, and it is in its infancy stage of inquiry (Cohen, 2004). The Backpacker Research Group (BRG), a branch of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS), indicated, “of the 76 dated references relating to backpacker and youth travel, only 11 were published before 1990” (Richards & Wilson, 2004, p.4).

Since 1990 there has been a notable increase in backpacker research (Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008) indicated through the increase in journal articles and publications directly and indirectly relating to backpacker tourism. Cohen (2005) views this increase as solidifying backpacker research as a “recognized sub-specialty of tourism studies” (p.1). Existing backpacker studies are primarily conducted by researchers based in Oceania, Europe, and Israel with an increasing presence of studies by researchers in Asia and South Africa. Backpacker studies conducted by researchers from the United States are relatively rare with few exceptions (e.g., Conran, 2006; D’Andrea, 2006; Obenour, 2004).

The lack of backpacker studies by United States based researchers was typified in the first published academic book focused solely on backpacker travel, *The Global Nomad: Backpacker Travel in Theory and Practice* (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Of the eighteen contributing authors, none resided in the United States. Four years later, the sequel, *Backpacker Tourism: Concepts and Profiles* (Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008), had
twenty-four contributing authors, none of whom resided in the United States. One contributing factor to the lack of research originating in or from the United States may be that the majority of backpacker tourism researchers are previous or current backpackers themselves (Cohen, 2006). Thus the lack of backpacker research from the United States may reflect the overall low participation in backpacking of people from the United States.

The lack of research from U.S. institutions may be exacerbated by the lack of: understanding of backpacking, infrastructure/superstructure catering to this type of traveler, and socio-cultural acceptance of taking off on long journeys for extended periods of time. In addition the lack of industry-based funding to pursue this stream of research may have had an affect on research output. Funding for backpacker research in countries such as Australia and New Zealand arguably mirrors both the socio-cultural acceptance of backpacking and the importance placed on understanding and catering to backpacker travelers by their tourism industries.

Jarvis and Peel (2008) indicated that the successful 1995 Australian Government ‘National Backpacker Tourism Development Strategy’ was guided by academic scholars with focused backpacker research agendas resulting in national policies and research programs supporting backpacker studies. This supports the assertion by Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) that government fiscal support encourages backpacker research and progressive marketing of their destinations while simultaneously acknowledging the economic and employment contributions of backpackers.

Data from Tourism Australia showed that in 2007 the average expenditure of the backpackers was more than double that of non-backpackers with backpackers averaging
expenditures of $5400AUS per person versus $2300AUS for non-backpackers. This was partially attributed to the backpacker visits averaging 71 nights compared to 25 nights for non-backpackers (Tourism Research Australia, 2008). Numbers presented by Tourism Research Australia must be considered in relation to the way they define a backpacker. They define a backpacker as anyone staying in a backpacker accommodation (e.g. hostel) for one or more nights.

Further consideration regarding the expenditure and length of stay needs to take into account the ability of many backpackers to be employed in Australia as part of the working-holiday visa scheme. For many of them, their main mode of accommodation is the backpacker hostel (Wilson, et al., 2008) thus influencing the numbers from which Tourism Research Australia draws their numbers. Backpackers arriving in Australia on working-holiday visas have the opportunity to legally work with varying stipulations dependent upon the reciprocal country agreements. The government supported and implemented program resulted in 111,973 working-holiday visas issued in 2007 with an expected increase to 130,000 working-holiday visas in 2008 (Australian Visa Bureau, 2007). While those on working holidays are not by default considered backpackers, it is shown that the majority of visitors on this scheme have a propensity to travel extensively and make use of the backpacker infrastructure, bringing them in-line with the Australian Governments definition of a backpacker.

1.2 Defining Backpackers

The initial typology of tourists developed by Cohen (1973) categorized travelers into institutional and non-institutional categories. Institutional travelers are mainstream
tourists seeking familiar and well-trodden destinations while non-institutional travelers, identified as explorers or drifters, seek unique and challenging destinations considered off-the-beaten path. In the context of Cohen’s typology, the majority of today’s backpackers are a categorical hybrid reflecting traits and practices of both institutional and non-institutional travelers. While the backpackers disdain for mass tourism mirrors that of the non-institutional travelers, their actual travel behaviors, by default, are arguably becoming similar to those of the institutionalized traveler. Welk (2004) indicates the postmodern backpacker tends to be defined more by what they are perceived not to be rather than by what they are, with the tourist viewed as the antithesis of the backpacker.

Defining the backpacker is still considered an evolving area of discourse amongst backpacker researchers with no agreement on a universal definition of a backpacker. Following the initial typology of Cohen, Vogt (1976) defined backpackers as wanderers. According to Vogt (1976), wanderers achieve status and prestige through three criteria. The first criterion is met when the wanderer illustrates autonomy, independence, and freedom through either actions or discourse. The second criterion is the perceived exoticness of the locations visited. The third criterion is the exoticness of the mode of travel. The third criterion, mode of travel, is consistently cited as a pertinent aspect defining backpacker travel, yet not until recently has research begun to examine this area (Vance, 2004).

In the 1980’s, Riley (1988) redefined the wanderers as budget travelers emanating from the financially constrained habits of this type of traveler which she identified in her
in-depth study of backpacker road culture. It was in 1990 that the term backpacker was brought to the academic literature as a definition for the wandering, non-institutionalized, budget traveler. Pearce (1990) introduced the term backpacker into the tourism literature and his definition currently stands as the most accepted, albeit contested, definition of this type of traveler. Characteristics of the backpackers, according to Pearce, are:

1. Preference for budget style accommodation
2. Rejection of a rigid travel timetable, in favor of an independently organized and flexible itinerary
3. Predominance of long vacations over short breaks
4. Emphasis on socializing
5. Emphasis on informality and a desire for adventurous participation in a range of activities

Richards and Wilson (2004a) stated “the problem with defining backpackers through their behavioral characteristics is that this does not uncover how the participants see themselves” (p.16). Sorensen (2003) argued the definition is too broad in scope and in his earlier work (1999) advocated that backpackers needed to define themselves and not be externally defined. Arguments were further influenced by what is deemed by backpacker researchers to be an increasingly heterogeneous community characterized by growing institutionalization which is accountable for fueling, and is fueled by, increasing popularity amongst a growing diversity of travelers.
1.3 Impetus for Backpacking

O’Reilly (2006) attributes the increase of sojourners traveling in the backpacker style to the global shifts in the economic and political landscapes occurring in the past two decades. Krippendorf (1984) conceded the increase is the result of industrialization which has led to a lost sense of identity in the workplace, stress, and to concur with O’Reilly (2006), unemployment. Pressures of globalization were identified by Ateljevic and Doorne (2001), in their qualitative study of backpackers sojourning in New Zealand, as contributing to the increasing popularity of backpacking. They found that backpackers are pessimistic of western lifestyles which are “associated with a loss of control over their lives; restructuring, competition, environmental degradation, big profits, greed, stress, and consumerism were words commonly associated with it” (p.78) which supports O’Sullivan (2003) in his view that there is increasing backlash against globally market-driven values.

Westerhausen (2002), in his holistic ethnography of the backpacker community, attributed the growth of backpacking to a sense of alienation from modern society supporting Cohen (1979) and MacCannell (1976) in their earlier identification of the existing relationship between tourism and alienation. Contextualized, the alienation characterizing the drifters of the 1970’s is not necessarily the same form of alienation referred to in postmodern society. In postmodern society most people are somewhat alienated since the community and social structures available to previous generations are decreasing or have vanished.
Putnam (2000) identified the disintegration of social grounding as a key to society’s sense of alienation. Community, religious, and occupational institutions historically offered sanctuaries for self-identity and security yet no longer operate in their traditional forms. Rates of divorce are high if people get married at all, job security based on seniority is considered a thing of the past, and social clubs have been displaced with virtual online communities (Putnam, 2000). Cushman (1990) indicates the loss of community, tradition, and shared meanings are characteristics of post World War II North America.

O’Sullivan (2003), a noted critical theorist, suggests that at the core of societal problems is the loss of identity. Identity is associated with the institutions to which people belong and as relationships with these institutions are severed or diminish in value, a state of anomie arises within persons no longer feeling a sense of belonging. Anomie is characterized by a loss of structure and purposefulness traditionally provided by the institutions to which one belongs. The loss of connection to societal institutions is viewed as contributing to the loss of identity. To recapture one’s identity and to fill the voids in people’s lives that are unable to be fulfilled by their home society, some seek out travel. Need for identity and belonging are themes identified in the backpacker literature as motivating the backpackers to travel to foreign lands (Ateljevic, 2008; Cohen, 1972; Westerhausen, 2002).

The backpacker community offers a surrogate haven for those no longer identifying with, or are alienated from, their home society. “Over the last thirty years this form of drifter-style tourism has developed its own tourism myth and spawned a mobile
sub-culture of international travellers” (Westerhausen & Macbeth, 2003, p.73). The growth in backpacking mirrors that of the growth in globalization, the decrease in community attachment, and the increase in anomie. Singh (2006) indicates “Authentic research will reveal the truth whether this tribe is a bunch of apparitions or ‘real travelers’ who often work as unacknowledged cultural ambassadors of good-will, peace and harmony in this strife-torn world” (p.3).

Experiential learning and transformation theories provide a framework for understanding the long-term backpacker experience. Levins (1978) contends that in order to see things from a new perspective one must disengage from ‘normal’ life. Backpackers traverse through varying cultural and geographical milieus conducive to challenging worldviews but the process through which worldviews are influenced through the backpacking experience is not understood.

The framework approaches the backpacking experiences as one that is a form of experiential learning and has the potential for transformation through episodes of culture shock. The theoretical framework is presented as a type of reflexivity giving insight into the way in which the research approaches the backpacking experience and is a form of theoretical sensitivity expounded upon in chapter 3.

1.4 Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theories offer explanations as to how learning occurs in experiential settings with a review of the literature indicating the primary models utilized are those of Kolb (1984). His model views experiential learning as occurring through four stages: concrete experience, observations and reflection, formation of abstract concepts
and generalizations, testing implications of concepts in new situations (Miettinen, 2000). The most popular model is based on the work of Dewey, considered the father of experiential education (Roberts, 2006). The model by Dewey laid the framework for the models by Kolb (1984) which focused on how experience turns into action. Both are considered at the forefront of advocating for experiential education through viewing it as the acquisition of knowledge and skills through structured learning experiences requiring critical reflection on behalf of the participants. Studies utilizing experiential learning theory tend to be in the area of education (e.g., Davidson, 2001; Healy & Jenkins, 2000; Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

1.5 Transformative Learning Theories

Experiential learning through backpacking can further be understood through transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1978) viewed the process of transformation as proceeding through a series of stages with the initial impetus of a ‘disorienting dilemma’ creating a reaction that necessitates the use of a person’s meaning structure in order to negotiate the dilemma. Meaning structures are composed of meaning perspective and schemes (Mezirow, 2000). A meaning perspective is a person’s worldview that acts as a filter for interpreting experiences that are socio-culturally constructed and typically reinforced throughout a person’s lifetime while meaning schemes are the beliefs, values, and attitudes of a person that provide the base for worldviews (Mezirow, 1996). Changes in meaning schemes are more easily influenced whereas a person’s meaning perspective is more difficult to penetrate and change (Carter, 2002). Change in a person’s worldview is not typically associated with a single event but instead is influenced by numerous
challenges presented to meaning schemes which when compiled have the ability to influence a change in a person’s meaning perspective.

Disorienting dilemmas occur when a person’s meaning perspective is unable to filter experiences with pre-existing schemes (Mezirow, 1996). The negotiation of the dilemma is an opportunity for growth through change in meaning schemes. Changes that occur are subjective and are based upon variables including a person’s pre-existing meaning structure, the dilemmas encountered, and the context in which they occur. Travel in foreign lands is rife with opportunities for disorienting dilemmas but what is disorienting to one person may not be for another. In order to understand transformation through the backpacking experience, it is necessary to understand the disorienting dilemmas experienced by the backpackers, how they are negotiated, and what are the outcomes. It is through identifying the process, which includes the disorienting dilemmas, that we can ascertain how the backpackers perceive their worldviews are influenced by their travel experiences. Perspective transformation, according to Mezirow (2000), occurs through the development of a more dependable frame of reference “…one that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change and integrates experience” (p.180).

Perspective transformation through the navigation of disorienting dilemmas is the premise behind culture shock theory (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Culture shock theory views transformation as occurring through cumulative experiences that challenge the meaning schemes of overseas sojourners. Reverse culture shock occurs upon returning home which is part of the overall experience. Critical reflection, a necessary element of
transformation, by the traveler on their experiences necessitates their overcoming the social and psychological dilemmas faced upon their return home prior to full comprehension of the experience and changes in their perspectives can occur.

1.6 Culture Shock Theory

Oberg (1960), a North American anthropologist, initially utilized the term culture shock to refer to an occupational disease affecting overseas sojourners caused by the disorientation created over the loss of familiar frames of reference. His definition is based on the U-curve hypothesis of Lysgaard (1955). Lysgaard conducted a study in the early 1950’s focusing on human adjustment to foreign cultures. The study looked at the relationship between the process of adjustment and the overall satisfaction of visits via experiences of Norwegian Fulbright Scholar visitors to the United States. The study indicated that close personal contact with Americans was related to positive adjustment as well as the length of time living in the host society. The relationship between the duration of stay and adjustment gave rise to the U-curve, a three stage model of long-term sojourner experiences abroad: initial adjustment, adjustment crisis, and positive adjustment. This is a continuum through which overseas sojourns experience while overseas with the degrees of adjustment varying as time overseas increases.

Culture shock is typically not triggered by a singular event or incident but rather by an amalgamation of many minor events in which the usual meanings the sojourner refers to in their home country social world are found to be invalid markers in the new surroundings (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Montuori & Fahim (2004) state, “seemingly insignificant differences can add up to create an experience not unlike Alice in
Wonderland for the discombobulated traveler” (p.250). Hottola (2004) argues culture shock rarely exists, pointing to the bottom of the U-curve as the defining moment of culture shock, but that many travelers do not reach that point due to their lack of time within an area. Furnham and Bochner (1986) indicate the reasons travelers do not experience the full culture shock spectrum are related to time, arrangements, tour/leader/guide/host, peers and social support, and the passive versus active participation in localities visited. Active participation is considered those activities in which cultural exchange occurs through fluid and dynamic interactions with the communities visited while passive is characterized by tourists passing through areas with little community contact.

Culture shock theory was expanded into a w-curve model by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963). The w-curve added an additional ‘wave’ to the original culture shock model which is known as reverse culture shock. According to reverse culture shock theory, travelers returning home from long-term overseas stays experience the same stages as culture shock although one difference is that those heading overseas may expect and be prepared for culture shock whereas those returning home may not (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

In the context of this dissertation, instead of culture shock being based solely on dissonance between geographically disparate cultures as is traditionally the case, an argument is put forth that the dissonance was between three cultures: culture visited, home culture, and the backpacker culture. The unique backpacker road culture (Riley, 1988) may be what the long-term backpackers are at odds with during the stages of
reverse culture shock during their readjustment back home. The traveler is no longer on the road but also not yet at home creating a liminal zone, a place in which a person is considered suspended and not attached to the norms of a specific society, in which adjustment challenges are faced as the dissonance between road culture and home culture collide creating a state of disequilibrium.

1.7 Study Rationale

The reputation of the United States and its citizens has decreased in recent years being associated with the perception that ethnocentricity represents a general picture of the American public (Joffe, 2006; Kohut & Stokes, 2007; Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2007). Ethnocentricty is deemed a combination of ignorance and arrogance identified with and reflecting a myopic worldview. Travel is an opportunity through which worldviews may be broadened with backpacking being one of the potential means through which to accomplish this. The process through which worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States is the focus of this dissertation.

In a review of backpacker studies, Pearce (2006) identified five areas of research that should be pursued to continue the current trajectory investigating the backpacker phenomenon: sustainability, human mobilities, impacts on communities, economic assessments, and the backpacker experience. Furthermore, he indicated that study topics of new or continuing importance include: backpacking as life extension, differences among backpackers and between backpackers and other travelers, return to home society, backpacker storytelling and narration, home society traveler motivation links, and
distinctive national identities in fostering backpacking. Each of these areas is included in this dissertation contributing to the understanding of backpackers from the United States and the influences their overseas travels have on their worldview.

The backpacker literature has focused on the actual journey while overseas with few studies incorporating the pre and post experiences of the trip. It is argued that the trip begins at the conception of the idea to travel and ends upon the internalization of the trip after returning home.

The departure for a major ‘trip’ and the process of return has not been studied in any detail in this volume [The Global Nomad] or in any other backpacker literature. But, given the tendency for many theoretical perspectives on backpacker travel to be based on the concept of liminality, it would seem a logical step to pay more attention to the preparation for travel and the re-integration of returning travelers. (Richards & Wilson, 2004, p.272)

The few studies focusing on the return home were conducted by Israeli researchers examining the Israeli backpacker experience contextualized by Israeli society (Noy, 2004; Maoz, 2006). Richards and Wilson (2004b) indicated the geographical reach of backpacker studies has been limited with representation highly concentrated in certain countries or regions highlighting the need for research in countries and regions currently unexamined. Exploration of the backpacker experience by United States backpackers is needed as there are no recent studies focusing on U.S. backpackers and the existing backpacker studies indicate lower-than-expected representation by those from the United States (Elsrud, 2001; Riley, 1988).

As there is minimal existing literature on backpackers from the United States, there is little basis from which to determine how backpackers perceive their overseas travels to have influenced their views of the world. Qualitative methodologies are well
suited for exploration of topics that are new or relatively unexplored bringing to the surface theories and/or variables that may be tested in future studies. The dissertation concerns itself with the process of understanding the overseas backpacking experience and how it influences worldviews. According to Morse (1998), “If the question concerns an experience and the phenomenon in question is a process, the method of choice for addressing the question is grounded theory” (p.64).

1.8 Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory methodology (GTM) is considered a method and an approach to producing theoretical understanding grounded in participant data that “…provides us with relevant predications, explanation, interpretations and applications” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.1). Grounded theory is not an exercise in supporting ideas or hypotheses with evidence garnered from data (McGhee et al., 2007) nor an easy way of conducting research void of rigor or methodology (Suddaby, 2006). It is a method utilized for building theory that is grounded in data representing the voices of the participants.

Grounded theory originated in the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is the most widely utilized qualitative oriented methodology (Denzin, 2004). Still heavily represented in healthcare studies, its expanse is shifting into many disciplines and fields including organizational behavior, anthropology, and tourism.

According to Henwood and Pidgeon (2003), grounded theory is defined as:

an intertwining of research process and outcomes-where the process involves the detailed, systematic but flexible interrogation of initially unstructured data selected for its close relationship to the problem under investigation, and the analytical outcomes combine a demonstrable relevance and ‘fit’ to the substantial problems, phenomenon, or situation under investigation (p.136).
The most salient benefit of using grounded theory, as well as other qualitative methodologies, is the importance placed on the points of view of the people studied. Perspectives obtained from the participants themselves allows for a deeper, richer and more meaningful insight into the questions posed.

1.9 Purpose Statement

To explore the process through which worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States

1.10 Problem Statement

The problem is a lack of understanding of backpackers from the United States and of the influences their journeys have on their worldviews.

1.11 Research Question

How are the worldviews of backpackers from the United States perceived to be influenced through their travel experiences?

1.12 Research Summary

Using grounded theory, secondary and primary data from in-depth interviews with backpackers from the United States were analyzed through using constant comparison as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The analysis explicated concepts, categories, and subcategories creating a theoretical framework resulting in substantive theory that answered the problem. Through exploring their backpacking experiences it was found that their worldviews were influenced through interactions while abroad requiring freedom from society and freedom to explore and be exposed to the other.
### 1.13 Definition of Terms

Terms identified throughout the dissertation are based on three sources: the participants themselves, the extant literature, and/or the researcher. Grounded theory requires questioning of pre-existing concepts as they may not be reliable or valid in relation to the phenomena under investigation. Those terms emanating from the participants or the literature are identified as so while the remaining definitions are from the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backpacking</td>
<td>A type of budget-oriented travel characterized by unstructured itineraries, preferably to off-the-beaten path destinations participated in for lengthy periods of time by a community of like-minded travelers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpacker</td>
<td>A contested concept symbolizing a person who takes journeys overseas that are independent, budget-oriented, and that travel for relatively long durations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpacker Circuit</td>
<td>Globally established, yet dynamic, backpacker routes identified through infrastructure and superstructure supporting the mobile backpacker community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liminal zone</td>
<td>A space, physically and mentally, in which travelers are suspended between the expected social norms of two societies. Travelers enter this space that is characterized by a lack of responsibility towards their home society or their host society creating a liminal space in which rules,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
expectations, and norms of either society are temporarily suspended leaving the traveler in a space in which they are able to operate free from societally imposed restrictions.

Perceived Influences
Direct or indirect events or experiences influencing the frames of reference of a person.

Worldview
“Foundation on how individuals perceive and order everything they know and experience” (Alstott, 2007, p.30).

1.14 Delimitations

Delimitations are a component of research that provides transparent parameters placed on the sampling frame. In grounded theory the existence of delimitations is minimal as it does not allow for the flexibility to follow the data. For this dissertation, the following delimitations were held throughout the data collection process.

1. Nationality

Data collection is delimited to backpackers from the United States, holding a passport from the United States, and currently residing in the United States.

2. Geographical Reach

Participation is limited to those currently residing in large metropolitan areas in the Midwest and Western United States.
3. **Participation**

Participants willing and able to partake in face-to-face tape-recorded interviews are utilized while participants willing and able to be interviewed by other means (e.g. phone, internet) are not included.

### 1.15 Limitations

There are several limitations that limit the scope of the study including:

1. **Language**

   All interviews and recruitment tools were conducted in English.

2. **Resources**

   Limitations of resources impacted upon the recruitment process, access to participants, and time of year recruited.

3. **Literature Review**

   Grounded theory methodology calls for the literature to be studied during data collection as themes arise, typically not priori. Recent variations of grounded theory methodology advocate for some prior knowledge, referred to as theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) is based on become familiar with the literature and one’s professional and personal experiences. As Chenitz (1986) indicates, the theoretical sensitivity a grounded theory begins with will decrease in importance as the data takes over. The dissertation was based upon prior comprehensive knowledge of the backpacker literature as well as the backpacker community. Limited backpacker research exists regarding the tail ends of the backpacker experience thus limiting the
knowledge base regarding the primary portion of the experience under examination.

4. **Recruitment of Participants**

As a recruitment tool the internet limited the type and number of persons recruited. Difficulties in recruitment was an issue due to the lack of geographical boundaries of the backpacker community, the lack of knowledge concerning backpackers from the United States, and the inability to identify where geographically the backpackers settle upon returning stateside.

5. **Researcher**

Expounded upon in the reflexivity section of chapter 2, the researcher identified as a long-term backpacker, had extensive experience as a backpacker, had previously conducted backpacker research, and was knowledgeable about the backpacker literature. As with all research, the researcher was likely to influence, consciously or unconsciously, the respondents during the interview process at some point or points during the process. Taped interviews were transcribed and offered insight into whether any comments, wording of questions, or the way questions were asked may have influenced the direction of the answers given.

6. **Sensitive Information**

While the subject under investigation was considered non-threatening, there was the potential for sensitive topics to arise which may or may not result in cautious, intentionally misleading, or lack of answers to questions. Part of the backpacking experience, that engaged in while overseas, was viewed as being played out in a
liminal zone in which immediate accountability to either the host or home countries were perceived as minimal or non-existent resulting in behavior that may not be appropriate or culturally accepted in one’s home country or community in which participants resided. The perceived lack of social boundaries resulted in some behaviors considered illegal in some societies thus the use of pseudonyms for all participants were utilized to help increase confidence in the participants to open up.

Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was based upon the submitted agreement that participants were given the option to provide information off the record, to have information deleted after it had been communicated, and to give participants the option to withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview. All interviews were audited through member checking giving participants the ability to change, delete, or clarify information in the interview transcripts.

7. Additional Information

Interviews were taped and upon completion, the tape recorder was turned off and anything stated thereafter was considered off-the-record and was not to be included in the data. Experience showed that after official interview sessions were completed the potential for relevant information surfaced which in those cases the participants were asked for their permission to put it on tape.
8. **Methodology**

The dissertation is not testing theory but rather producing it. The objective of this dissertation was to explore the process through which worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States resulting in substantive theory.

9. **Reflection**

The data was collected outside of the actual backpacker journeys thus the views were based on reflection.

10. **Data Management**

There were limits regarding the management and collection of data. Data collection, management, and analysis were completed by the same person.

1.16 **Assumptions**

1. Worldviews are influenced by life events with or without travel experiences.
2. Worldviews are socially and culturally constructed.
3. Reality is socially and culturally constructed.
4. Multiple realities exist and shape, and are shaped by, worldviews.
5. Perceptions are a person’s reality.
6. There is no objective truth external from the participant’s perceptions.

1.17 **Significance of the Study**

This dissertation contributes to building an understanding of backpackers from the United States. Through understanding the process of how worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of the backpackers, it is necessary to determine
the stages of the process which include prior to the journey, the journey itself, and after the journey. Through this trajectory we are able to understand the process as well as the outcomes. This knowledge will create an understanding of the backpacker phenomena and how it can potentially influence society. As Scott (2003) states, societies change through individuals thus it is argued that the experiences through which the backpackers are engaged and the outcomes thereof are brought back to the communities and societies in which they live.

The culture in the United States does not advocate for the backpacking experience and is not part of the typical life stage trajectory as in other countries. New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom are countries in which their socio-cultural norms advocate for and encourage extensive backpacking overseas. The United States needs to be aware of this practice as they are host to many of these backpackers and through understanding their unique sub-culture they can better meet their needs and the needs of the communities in which they visit. Similarly, as more exposure is placed on the opportunities, experiences, and the outcomes of the backpacking journeys there is potential for more cultural acceptance for those who partake in the experience.

The findings of this dissertation may contribute to tourism policy decisions through dispelling myths and creating awareness based on empirically grounded data. Policy makers, planners, and others responsible for determining the course of tourism development may begin to fund studies focusing on understanding inbound and outbound backpackers. Backpacking policy at the governmental level is relatively new but like the 1995 Australian Backpacker Strategy (Jarvis, 2008), responsible for tourism policy and
direction, awareness created opportunities through fiscal support of further backpacker research. This study has significance in terms of understanding how backpacker travel can potentially be a benefit to society by broadening the worldviews of participants through interactions occurring outside of one’s comfort zone.

Lastly, this dissertation gives a voice to backpackers from the United States which until now have been relatively absent from the literature. Backpackers from the United States are present on the global backpacker circuits but to what extent, in what capacity, and for what reasons are unclear. As this was the first line of research concentrating solely on backpackers from the United States, the intention was to provide a platform from which further studies and streams of research into this phenomenon can occur.

1.18 Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter one provided an overview of backpacking, backpacker research, the theoretical framework from which the research is approached (reflexivity), limitations, delimitations, definitions, and the statement of the problem. Chapter two provides in-depth coverage of the theoretical framework from which the researcher has approached the study. As grounded theory does not begin with a theoretical framework, the framework, including the literature review, are presented as the reflexivity of the researcher, a central component to all grounded theory studies. Chapter three provides an overview of grounded theory. Chapter four presents the procedures through which the research occurred. Chapter five presents the results via the storyline that emerged from the data. Chapter six provides discussion and implications for the research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the process through which worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States. Chapter two commences with reflexivity that includes a theoretical framework utilizing experiential learning theory, transformative learning theory, and culture shock theory. The backpacker literature is then presented with the focus on the backpacking community, the backpacking experience, and the backpacker literature. The backpacker experience is contextual and the literature is included to give the reader an understanding of the backpacker world which is necessary to understand the impetus for the study, the study itself, and the resulting claims.

2.1 Reflexivity and Theoretical Sensitivity

Postmodern scholars emphasize the inclusion of reflexivity as an important component of modern day scholarship empowering the reader through presenting the researcher’s worldview and its formulation (Neill, 2006). One of the many ways in which reflexivity is used is through the placement of preconceived ideas, values, beliefs, and experiences of the researcher(s) into a study providing transparency of their positions when approaching research (Hall & Callery, 2001). Cutcliffe (2000) and Charmaz (2000) emphasized the need for grounded theory research to be accompanied by acknowledgement of the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge in the area under study. Robson (2002) argued further that reflexivity should include the social identity of the researchers as well as their overall background. Zydziuanite (2007) elucidated the process
of reflexivity stating there are several levels at which transparency should be integrated into the research: the theoretical framework from which the researcher is working from, biographical highlights that may impact the study, and the context of the study.

This research is a confluence of my passions for, and experiences in, teaching, travel, and research. I view travel as an educational experience harboring the potential to transform worldviews through the development of a broader framework from which to view the world. The emergence of a broader framework through participation in travel may result in either positively or negatively influencing previously held assumptions. I see the change in worldviews as potentially affecting the participants, other travelers, those in the communities visited, and the societies to which travelers return. In what ways or through what process has yet to be determined.

As a backpacker for over twenty years I traveled, worked, and lived abroad in varying capacities, primarily in developing nations, that provided a platform for viewing the transformation of the backpacker community as well as my own worldview. I have experienced culture shock and reverse culture shock on many occasions, including that associated with service in the United States Peace Corps, and view the connection between learning, growth, culture shock and reverse culture shock to be inextricably linked when placed in the context of the backpacker experience. These experiences are coupled with teaching in the area of tourism in which my teaching philosophy followed the educational philosophies of Freire (1970) and Kolb (1984). Furthermore, Morse (2001) indicated in her position as an editor that she requires work to include the cultural
backgrounds of the researchers thus giving the reader an awareness of potential cultural biases.

Hofstede (2007) noted that research has historically emanated from the “politically and economically dominant parts of the world” (p.20) with much of the research inflicted with ethnocentric bias. Mezirow (1996) stated that “cultural frames of reference constitute the boundaries and formulas with which the learner differentiates, assigns values, and integrates experience” (p.162). As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and research is diffused throughout the world, it is argued here that the importance of stating one’s cultural frames of reference is imperative when publishing qualitative research. I bring to this research a perspective that has been influenced by my being a male, growing up in the mid-west and being educated by the American public school system. I have lived in different regions of the United States and have been engaged in differing occupations in the United States and abroad.

The literature review is not exempt from reflexivity as every researcher must decide what to include and to what extent. Grounded theorists hold conflicting views on when to conduct the literature review, the extent of the review, and where to place it within the overall framework of the study. One of the tenets of traditional grounded theory is adherence to entering the field tabula rasa. Tabula rasa in relation to grounded theory refers to starting without knowledge of the phenomena under study or theories that may explain it; it is starting with a blank slate (Mills, et al., 2006a). Henwood and Pidgeon (2003) referred to this strategy as theoretical agnosticism, or theoretical ignorance. McCallin (2003) indicated this is where beginning researchers in grounded
theory have problems as they approach the suggestion as a hard rule, which it is not. While Glaser (1998) has wavered minimally on his original premise about the use of literature, progressive forms of grounded theory indicate it is neither possible nor logical to enter into an area of research without a basic understanding of the extant literature (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Decisions on what to include in the literature review were based on what information may impact upon the emergence of theory grounded in the data. The categories and variables need to emerge from the data and not be sought out priori and then tested. It was decided that an overview of the backpacker literature be presented in order to give the reader an in-depth understanding of the backpacker phenomenon which ties in directly with understanding the theoretical sensitivity of the framework which follows the suggestion by Corbin (1998). According to Corbin, grounded theory studies should provide the context at macro and micro levels in order for the reader to better conceptualize the environment in which the study pertains.

Grounded theory is typically not situated within a framework as the methodology is designed to create a framework. This said, the framework that follows is presented as a general approach to understanding the backpacking experience and is not presented to guide theoretical testing. The theoretical framework contributes to an understanding of the backpacker experience and is another form of reflexivity giving the reader an understanding of the platform from which the research emanated. Creswell (2003) stated there are three ways in which theory can be used in a qualitative methodology: theory as an explanation for behavior, theory as a perspective, and theory resulting from discovered
knowledge (Creswell, 2003). This dissertation uses theory as a perspective as well as theory that is discovered. Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to theory as a perspective as theoretical sensitivity.

2.2 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning theories offer a framework for understanding the learning process associated with alternative learning methods. Kolb (1984) is considered the father of modern day experiential learning with his research cited in the majority of studies focused on experiential learning. Kolb built on the work of Dewey who viewed experiential learning as a cyclical process progressing from the inductive to the deductive and guided by well-designed programs with definable objectives. Dewey viewed personal experience and education as mutually dependent. The process his model espoused was that learning from experience starts with observation, is evaluated in relations to past experiences and education, and commences with re-conceptualization (Miettinen, 2000).

Expanding on the work of Dewey, Kolb (1984) offered a four-stage process leading to the acquisition of knowledge through experiences that were reflected upon, conceptualized, and framed to be tested in future experiences. Kolb (1984) saw experiential education as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p.5). The model by Kolb is the most referenced in the experiential learning literature and is considered the platform from which most other recent models were instigated (Brennan, 2007). Brennan found Kolb’s experiential learning model was referenced, from 1971 until 1999, in 990 articles with an additional
643 articles published from 1999-2002 indicating its increasing popularity amongst scholars (p.19).

Bales (1979) viewed the increase in the practice of experiential learning as a response to dissatisfaction with formal education attributing it to its perceived lack of relevance to the ‘real world’. O’Sullivan (1996), referring to the United States higher educational system, sees the traditional educational structure as lacking the ability to prepare students for what he refers to as a global paradigm shift likening it to, in terms of magnitude, the transition from the middle ages to the modern age. Reflecting earlier works by Freire (1970), O’Sullivan views the formal educational system as perpetuating an apathetic approach to preparing globally responsive citizens. Freire and O’Sullivan agreed that the control of society is partially controlled and managed through the educational system which they view as perpetuating an ethnocentric view of the world with the consequences influencing local, national, and international levels of society. Their views reflect the postmodernist view that any research is mired in power through authoritative knowledge influencing the way in which local, cultural, and political issues are addressed (Richardson, 2004).

Education is a means to overcoming the aforementioned struggles through the acquisition of knowledge that can bring into question the issues created by the privileged. Experiential education is an opportunity for learning to occur through non-traditional educational experiences resulting in theoretical skills that may not be acquired in formalized educational settings. Emphasis of experiential education programs is placed on the growth of the person through active participation in participant-centered
experiences. The growth of the participant is achieved through purposefully designed and executed programs challenging the participants to utilize their strengths, identify their weaknesses, and work with others to achieve common goals and objectives.

The Association for Experiential Learning (AEE) states “experiential education is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values” (AEE Website retrieved March 17, 2008). Literature indicates there are many types, methods, and models associated with experiential learning. The types of experiential learning include outdoor education, wilderness education, environmental education and adventure education (Bisson, 1996). The backpacker experience is viewed here as most closely aligned with that of adventure education.

Hattie, et al., (1997) found in their meta-analysis of the adventure education literature that adventure education programs have major lasting impacts upon participants with the greatest effects on participants’ independence, confidence, self-efficacy, and self-understanding (p.67). They concluded that program outcome variance is influenced the most by age, length of the program participated in, and the location of the program. Outward Bound, the adventure education program founded by the late Kurt Hahn, is the hallmark of adventure education programs with their success measured through outcomes as delineated in their mission statement:

Our mission is to inspire character development and self-discovery in people of all ages and walks of life through challenge and adventure, and to impel them to achieve more than they ever thought possible, to show compassion for others, and to actively engage in creating a better world. (www.outwardbound.org/aboutus. vp.html retrieved March 2, 2008)
Luckner and Nadler (1997) identified twelve characteristics of experientially based learning. The characteristics of most experiential learning models are based on facilitated and/or structured experiences which is a key difference between experiential learning theories that espouse well-designed programs leading to pre-determined outcomes and the backpacker experience. The backpacker experience is viewed as an independent, self-directed learning experience with few planned objectives or formalized evaluative criteria with the backpacker literature indicating many of the same characteristics identified by Luckner and Nadler are characteristic of the backpacker experiences. The twelve characteristic of experiential learning, according to Luckner and Nadler, are:

1. Disequilibrium
2. Decreased time
3. Develop relationships quickly
4. Diversity of strengths
5. Encourage risk taking
6. Equality
7. Common language and mythology
8. Chaos and crisis in a safe environment
9. Projective technique
10. Meta-learning
11. Kinesthetic imprint
12. Fun
2.3 Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow (1978) is credited with bringing perspective transformation theory to the fore of educational research through his initial study of transformation in older women returning to school. His theory of perspective transformation focuses on explaining the process through which transformation occurs and is viewed as connecting a person’s expectations to the meanings derived from experiences. The theory bridged adult development with adult learning resulting in support and critique contributing to the evolving theoretical framework (see Clark & Wilson, 1991; Mezirow, 1991). The theory of perspective transformation through education offers a potential explanation for how change occurs in adults meaning structures through experiential learning experiences. The change through transformation is less of a change in what a persons knows and more of a change in the way they know it (Baumgartner, 2001).

Meaning structures are composed of two constructs: meaning perspectives and meaning schemes (Mezirow, 2000). Meaning perspectives are a person’s overall worldview, or frames of reference, and meaning schemes are constructs including beliefs, values, and attitudes (Mezirow, 1997). Meaning schemes are continually challenged throughout the course of daily living whereas meaning perspectives are less likely to be influenced through individual micro-level experiences. Acting as experience filters, meaning perspectives and schemes provide the structure for interpretation of experiences (Mezirow, 1991). “Meaning perspectives mirror the way our culture and those individuals responsible for our socialization happen to have defined various situations” (Mezirow, 1991, p.131). Education is viewed as a catalyst for change in meaning.
schemes and perspectives as reflected in the plethora of studies focused on fostering transformative learning.

Meaning perspectives are an amalgamation of socially and culturally defined ways of interacting with the world and interpreting experiences within it. Through socialization, perspectives are formative in the early stages of life becoming a means through which assumptions and expectations are created and reinforced. This creates a worldview, or frame of reference, through which a person views and interacts with the world and are based on the expectations utilized to function within culturally defined societies. Worldviews provide meaning where meaning is not innate.

In cases where worldviews, or meaning perspectives, are unable to account for experiences referred to by Mezirow as ‘disorienting dilemmas’, meaning perspectives are questioned resulting in a need to revise existing perspectives to accommodate for the new experiences. Revision of meaning structures through critical reflection is at the core of the theory of perspective transformation. Formulated with respect to transformation through education, Mezirow (1978) views perspective transformation as:

The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings. More inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspectives are superior perspectives that adults choose if they can because they are motivated to better understand the meaning of their experience. (p.167)

Mezirov (1991) sees transformation occurring through ten phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions

4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans

8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and

10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective


Researchers in the area of transformative learning agree there are three primary components necessary for transformation to occur: disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, and rational discourse.

Disorienting dilemmas, according to Mezirow (1991), can be epochal or incremental. Epochal are spawned by a sudden crisis such as a death in the family, loss of a job, or other experiences that are unplanned for and the outcomes unable to be understood through pre-existing perspectives. Incremental transformation is characterized by understated events amalgamating into a transformation non-indicative of one primary occurrence. Both types of transformation must be accompanied by critical reflection in order for the transformation to occur.
For backpackers, the literature indicates that for many the impetus to backpack is an epochal event that has occurred in their daily lives (Maoz, 2008) while the literature is absent regarding epochal events during backpacking. From a different perspective, the backpacker experience in its entirety can be viewed as epochal. Incremental events are smaller events which accumulate over time potentially resulting in a shift of perspective which is aligned with culture shock theory. While instances of culture shock are sometimes referred to as composed of a single event, the literature indicates in actuality it is a succession of events where dissonance between assumptions occurs and formatively results in a transformation of perspective.

Critical reflection is at the core of transformative experiences which Mezirow (1990) sees as “challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning” (p.12). He sees reflection consisting of three forms: content (reflecting on what we perceive), process (reflecting on how we perceive), and premise (awareness of why we perceive) with premise reflection needed for transformation to occur. These forms or reflection are socially constructed and according to Freire (1970) and Mezirow (1996), are tied to societal and cultural institutions. They agreed that critical reflection through education is emancipatory through its ability to question the cultural and social norms constraining people’s ability to question and understand the basis of their assumptions.

Mezirow (1981) finds the cohabitation of critical reflection and rational discourse to be necessary for transformation to occur. Rational discourse is the medium through which transformation is promoted and developed. It is deemed contingent on the ability to talk openly and honestly (Carter, 2002; Scott, 2003). According to Merriam (2004),
“mature cognitive development is foundational to engaging critical reflection and rational discourse necessary for transformative learning” (p.65). Clark and Wilson (1991) view rationalization as created by the very institutions Mezirow indicates are restricting transformation. This circuitous problem may find answers in conducting studies outside of formalized institutions of learning that are part of one’s society.

Kilgore & Bloom (2002) found rationale discourse as dependent upon the form and function of relationships. In their study of incarcerated women and welfare-to-work program recipients they found that transformation may appear to occur if evaluated by exigent criteria but does not necessarily indicate a transformation of perspective occurred. “As will all marginalized people, learning the script of those in power is a necessary survival technique” (Lawless, 2001, cited in Kilgore & Bloom, 2002, p.129). This supports the premise that open relationships must be built on trust if self-disclosure is to occur, a precursor to perspective transformation.

Taylor (2007) indicated a need for studies that are “more informal, less controlled by the instructor, and more susceptible to external influences (e.g. natural environment, public)” (p.186). It is argued here that the backpacker experiences offer the context of a non-controlled environment in which participants are exposed to disorienting dilemmas through daily interaction with foreign cultures and landscapes. Travel overseas in cultures operating from differing worldviews and perspectives place the backpacker in constantly changing situations in which their existing frames of reference may be challenged and/or influenced.
Critiques arising in the literature question what constitutes a transformation, how transformation is measured, and whether or not it can or should be measured (Taylor, 2000). Berger (2004) stated the definition of transformation is contingent upon the person and their theoretical stance. Another critique of Mezirow’s model focuses on the lack of accountability for the influences of social institutions and their associated powers consisting of political, social, cultural, economic, and historical conditions (Hart, 1990). Since the inception of the original model Mezirow has since acknowledged the influences socio-cultural institutions have on transformation. Scott (2003) supports the premise that transformation is not purely a personal endeavor but rather is dependent upon the social milieu further arguing that transformation begins and ends within a social context.

Lyon's (2001) study of women educators living and working overseas supports Mezirow’s theory while simultaneously reinforcing support for the argument that relationships are an important variable in transformation. She found that relationships are both sources of disorienting dilemmas as well as resources for navigating disorienting dilemmas. Additionally, the findings indicated the form and function of relationships vary according to the stages of the overseas experience. According to Scott (2003) “The consequences of an individual cognitive structural perspective/habit of mind transformation do change relationships with others, relationships to knowledge, self-concept, and above all, change in behavior (p.277).

Other notable theorists in the area of transformative learning are Boyd, Freire, and O’Sullivan. In Boyd’s model (Boyd & Myers, 1988) he viewed grieving to be at the heart of transformation as it is a process of letting go of old and comfortable ways of thinking.
and ushering in the new. Freire (1970) and O’Sullivan (1996) approached transformation from the perspective that individual and social transformations are conjoined. Considered radical in their views, they view education as the vehicle to emancipation of people from societal strictures through shifting the locus of control onto the individual away from that of societal institutions. The shift of power through education occurs through giving students the knowledge and critical thinking skills needed to understand their oppression and its origins. Through education and critique, people are better equipped to understand their experiences and how their perceptions are based upon worldviews created and influenced by their environment and the institutions within it.

Taylor (2007) indicated that transformative learning theory was “found to be effective at capturing the meaning making process of adult learners, particularly the learning process of paradigmatic shifts” (p.174). Perspective transformation provides a model of adult learning by explaining the process of how personal paradigms evolve and expand in adulthood through education. Transformation, according to Mezirow, reflects a process as well as an outcome of adult development. The outcome, according to Mezirow, of the developmental process is a more inclusive and discriminating world view. The final stage is the integration of the new outlook into one’s daily life. For the backpackers, the ways in which experiences are integrated into the lifestyles of participants upon returning back to ‘daily life’ are relatively unexplored.

An area of concern expressed in the literature is that transformation theory has yet to determine why some people are transformed through experiences while others are not (Taylor, 1998). One of the core characteristics of perspective transformation is the
presence of a disorienting dilemma which is shared by culture shock theory. Culture shock theory indicates that problems associated with culture shock are a result of the discontinuance between their frames of reference used in their home society and those encountered while overseas. Not unlike perspective transformation theory, culture shock theory indicates people move through a cycle that is influenced by many of the same variables identified used to explain perspective transformation.

2.4 Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock Theory

Culture shock is characterized by confusion, disorientation, and an overall loss of frame of reference. The majority of studies in the earlier periods of culture shock research focused on the anxiety stage likening it to the hermeneutic concept of ‘breakdown’ where a person’s typical correlation between social symbols and their meanings fail. Culture shock is typically not triggered by a singular event or incident but rather by an amalgamation of many minor incidents in which the usual meanings the sojourner refers to in their home country become invalid in unfamiliar, overseas environs. Montuori & Fahim (2004) stated “seemingly insignificant differences can add up to create an experience not unlike Alice in Wonderland for the discombobulated traveler” (p.250).

Since its inception in the sixties, culture shock has been approached from three perspectives: medical, instrumental, and social psychological/human psychology. The initial identification of culture shock, based on the U-curve, was viewed from a medical condition paradigm. In this view, culture shock anxiety was considered negative and something to be fixed or cured. The U-curve was based on time and level of adjustment. Oberg (1960), a North American anthropologist, initially utilized the term culture shock
to refer to an occupational disease affecting overseas sojourners caused by the disorientation created over the loss of familiar frames of reference. This definition was based on the U-curve hypothesis of Lysgaard (1955) who conducted a study in the 1950’s focusing on human adjustment to foreign cultures. The study looked at the relationship between the process of adjustment and the overall satisfaction of visits via the experiences of Norwegian visitors to the United States as part of the governmentally based Fulbright Scholar program. Results indicated close personal contact with host foreigners related positively to adjustment as well as the length of time anchored in the host society.

“Adjustment seems to have been ‘good’ among those who stayed in America less than six months, also ‘good’ among those who stayed there more than eighteen months, while those who left America after a stay from six to eighteen months seem to have been ‘less well’ adjusted” (p.49). This relationship between the duration of stay and adjustment gave rise to the U-curve. “The relationship between duration and adjustment is…a genuine time process that every grantee must be assumed to have passed through or would have passed through if he had only stayed longer” (p.49). The study indicated three stages of sojourner culture shock evolution: initial adjustment, adjustment crisis, and good adjustment.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extend the U-curve hypothesis finding sojourners proceed through a W-curve. The W-curve proposed made no mention of culture shock as a medical condition but rather as a condition that is instrumental with the view that the quality and quantity of relationships overseas impact the magnitude of culture shock and
reverse culture shock. This extension, defined as reverse culture shock, includes the principals of the U-curve process albeit the U-curve was extended to include an additional phase occurring during the months following the sojourners return home. The initial euphoria of returning “home” evolves into anxiety/frustration attributed to the sojourners dissonance between their romantic vision of ‘home’ held while away, and the existence of conflicting reality one is exposed to during the process of immersion back into one’s home society. The dissonance requires another shift in equilibrium, reflecting the process of assimilation as the ones experienced during the assimilation process overseas.

Lysgaard (1955) implied in his initial U-curve study that the adjustment period takes roughly twenty months with the bottom of the U-curve reached between six and eighteen months. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) indicated that “Americans” overseas need more than a year to go through the full culture shock cycle. At one year they found that overseas workers just start to acculturate and effectively operate in a foreign society.

This finding may not be valid 45 years later for several reasons. The first is that cultural distance between countries has narrowed considerably. Technological advancement in global communication, diffusion of popular culture through media, and access to global news via the internet contribute to decreasing cultural distance which arguably was much wider a decade ago. Second, family and community ties were stronger back then (Putnam, 2000) which is related to self-identity. Self-identity is becoming increasingly amorphous due to the decreasing importance of strict social boundaries, roles, and geographic demarcations (O’Sullivan, 2003). The concepts of
family and community are no longer geographically bound nor necessarily tied to a

genealogical line but rather are viewed as social institutions built around relationships
that may or may not be socially sanctioned.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) took an instrumental approach to culture shock
finding that critical to the adjustment phase overseas was the social network of host
nationals. Bochner et al. (1979) in a study on the relationship between overseas students,
their social networks, and satisfaction with the overseas experience found that the
overseas students potentially have three tiers of networks. The first tier, is mono-cultural,
the second tier is bicultural which includes the host nationals, and multicultural. Those
staying within the first tier network experience the least satisfaction with their overseas
experience. Supporting Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), Ward, Bochner, & Furnham
(2001) found the social network is a primary factor in adjustment and attributes it to the
host nationals playing the supporting role of culture-mentors. Other variables influencing
the presence and magnitude of the culture shock include the duration of stay in-country
(Hottola, 2004), age (Court & King, 1979), and the cultural distance between host and
home countries (Furnham & Bochner, 1982).

Culture shock studies flourished throughout the 1960s and 1970s focusing
primarily on university students studying abroad, expatriates abroad, and overseas
volunteers including those engaged in religious missions (e.g. see Church, 1982). The
U.S. Peace Corps, begun in 1961, is a volunteer program designed to offer cross-cultural
experiences offering Americans the opportunity to learn first-hand about other cultures
while simultaneously creating opportunities for host countries to learn about Americans.
Based on the cross-cultural paradigm, the program has been of interest to researchers studying culture shock offering ideal Petri dish for culture shock studies (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Culture shock studies utilizing Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960’s and early 1970’s concentrated on two areas: the high attrition rates of the volunteers and “the recognition of the importance of situational determinants of adjustment in the field as distinct from selection procedures aimed at choosing the right individuals for the job” (p.137).

Adler (1975), a former United States Peace Corps Volunteer, viewed culture shock as an opportunity for personal growth. He viewed the anxiety experienced as a positive event offering the sojourner an opportunity to transform from a monoculture worldview to an intercultural frame of reference (p.22). The oft cited model by Adler focuses on the transitional phases considered instrumental in experiencing culture shock. The phases somewhat mirror the U-curve but as Adler pointed out, the U-Curve as well as the W-curve are void of any breakdown in phases. Adler saw the transitional experiences of overseas sojourners to start with the initial contact phase, followed by disintegration, then reintegration, autonomy, and then independence. He took the variable of time out of the original model by Oberg (1960) as he saw the process of culture shock as series of phases through which sojourners pass through yet at varying times. The human psychology perspective on which the model was based viewed culture shock as playing an instrumental part in the transformation of the person. “The transitional experience begins with the encounter of another culture and evolves into the encounter with self” (p.18).
Montuori & Fahim (2004) support the humanistic psychology approach to culture shock taken by Adler. According to them, the current paradigms through which culture shock is viewed fails in addressing the personal growth and advocate humanistic psychology because personal growth is at the core of its tradition (p.257). Personal growth, or transformation, may potentially be understood through the transformative learning theory or the theory on which it is based, Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation.

A few studies focus on tourism and culture shock. Cort and King (1979), in conducting one of the initial studies marrying tourism and culture shock, found culture shock did not significantly correlate with previous travel experiences or participant internal/external locus of control; age was found significant in that older tourists had more culture shock relative to younger tourists. Issues related to the reliability of the study include the length of the participant journey and the type of journey. The short duration of the participants’ stay overseas, six weeks, was identified by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) as too short a period to go through the U-curve. The second issue was the insulation/bubble of the tour group protecting them from external elements which individual travelers to the same locations would potentially deal with.

Furnham (1984) found “the very diversity of approaches, interests, and findings make it fairly difficult to summarize and classify results and theories in this area” (p.43). He articulated that tourist culture shock was still in its infancy stage at the time (p.55) and while nearly 25 years have passed since the initial studies on the relationship between tourism and culture shock commenced few studies have extended this research stream
with the exception of work by Hottolla (2004) and Pearce (1988). Hottola (2004) argues culture shock rarely exists pointing to the bottom of the U-curve as the defining moment of culture shock but that many travelers don’t reach that point supporting the findings of Furnham and Bochner (1986). They indicated the reasons travelers don’t experience the full culture shock spectrum include the duration of the trips, arrangements, tour/leader/guide/host, peers and social support, and the passive vs. active participation in localities visited (p.149).

2.5 Evolution of Backpacking

Backpacking as a type of travel is traced to the practices of the drifters and explorers of the 1960’s originally identified by Cohen (1972) as non-conformist travelers on extended overseas journeys to destinations disassociated with increasing mass tourism. At the time, mass tourism was reaching unheralded zeniths fueled by increasing access to previously inaccessible areas, development of areas previously lacking in key supporting infrastructure and/or superstructure able to accommodate mass tourism, and changing lifestyles which tourism became a part of (Graburn & Barthel-Bouchier, 2001; Krippendorf, 1984). Societal changes included the growth of the middle class in Western societies equating to a larger portion of the population financially able to partake in holidays, somewhat akin to the current changes occurring in India and China which in the near future will arguably have similar impacts upon the tourism landscape through their ability structurally and financially to pursue travel experiences that were previously restricted. Graburn (1983) argues that:

Styles of tourism may be leading indicators of fundamental changes which are taking place in a class or national culture, changes which may be latent in the
more restricting institutions of the everyday world, because tourism is that short section of life in which people believe they are free to exercise their fantasies, to challenge their physical and cultural selves and to expand their horizons. (p.29)

It was during the turbulent times of the 1960’s and early 1970’s, characterized by radical social changes in the West, that Cohen brought to the forefront of tourism research the dichotomy between institutional and non-institutionalized travelers, or mass versus individualized tourism.

While the drifters and explorers, considered non-institutionalized travelers, were viewed as a relatively novel addition to the tourism landscape at that time, their participation in this type of travel was anything but new with the progenitor of this type of traveler being the Grand Tourist of the 17th and 18th centuries (Leed, 1991). Towner (1985) indicated that all tourist movements are “the product of a social and cultural environment” (p.299). The Grand Tour was a common rite of passage originally embarked on by young adults, originally mostly men, from British aristocratic families partaking in extended journeys customized as a finishing school following graduation from university. This form of experiential education was designed to supplement formal schooling through exposing the young travelers to people, places, and cultures unlike those found in their homeland.

The rite of passage associated with the Grand Tour was the merging of two prior traditions: the ‘vers sacrum’ and the “peregrination academica” (Leed, 1991, pp.184-185). According to Leed, ‘vers sacrum’ is a German tradition in which young knights journeyed to important cities of the period. As a rite of passage, these knights focused on extending their networks that would be beneficial to their careers. ‘Peregrination
academica’ was explained by Leed as an experiential learning pilgrimage embarked on by scholars. These two traditions preceded the Grand Tour which Leed indicates formed the bedrock of the Grand Tour tradition.

The Grand Tour originated with the intention for aristocratic youth to tour the great cities of Europe under the guidance of a trained tutor, typically a respected scholar, whom was responsible for the learning, networking, and behavioral guidance of the young travelers. Itineraries focused on visiting the hubs of European culture at the time including Paris, Florence, and Rome (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006). The opportunity to study arts, philosophy, and other canons of aristocratic culture was accompanied by the utilitarian need to network with the elite of continental Europe, a pre-requisite for entering the ranks of the European aristocracy (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). The journey simultaneously offered an opportunity to engage in behaviors socially unbecoming of the young aristocrats and was played out by “drinking each other under the table and onto the floor” (Feifer, 1985, p.102) as well as the courting of the locals. “By 1785, just before the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars put an end to it, there were an estimated 40,000 Englishmen traveling on the Continent” (Feifer, 1985, p.99).

As the industrial revolution spread throughout the West, so did the economic benefits resulting in disposable income for a greater number of people that was accompanied by an increase in available time to use it. The aristocratic young adults were no longer alone in their wont for or access to travel as young travelers from other classes and countries began to infiltrate the, by then, well established grand tour routes. The newcomers to the travel landscape differed from the aristocrats in that they were more
likely to engage in functional as well as recreational pursuits as part of their tour. Apprenticeships or short-term employment opportunities were coupled with the art of travel giving newcomers the means by which to engage in long-term journeys sometimes extending up to several years.

Adler (1985) referred to this type of travel as tramping, represented by young adults taking to the road for adventure, sightseeing, and employment. Work was a necessary evil for most trampers and was utilized as a means to return to the road while reciprocally meeting the needs of businesses. The growth in popularity and participation in tramping contributed to eventual differences within the tramping society as some worked while others utilized their sojourns primarily for idleness (Leeson, 1979). Societies on the receiving end of the trapper visits began to view the trampers more as vagrants and delinquents rather than visitors contributing to their culture or society. “Their mobility was conceived as a social problem, and their motivation explained in individual, psychological terms as wanderlust” (Adler, 1985, p.341).

Disregard for, and animosity towards, trampers may have carried over or given birth to the hobos, a uniquely American travel institution characterized as a subculture of travelers leading itinerant lifestyles mixing work, recreation and travel. While tramping decreased in the European landscape following World War I, the popularity of the hobo lifestyle was in full swing in the United States with the literature indicating this social institution was prevalent from the late 1800’s through the mid-1900’s (Creswell, 2001). Similar to the grand tourists and the trampers, this group became stigmatized for its lifestyle as behaviors became increasingly deviant and perceived detrimental to society in
general. Drinking, homelessness, bumming for food and/or money all became synonymous with the hobo lifestyle and may carry over into the profiling of current day long-term backpackers.

Some backpacker research mentions the seeming connection between Grand Tour participants of the 17th and 18th centuries and modern day backpackers (Newlands, 2006) with a few researchers (e.g. Adler, 1985; Towner, 1985) extending the discussions of the historical roots of backpacking. Even with the historical research there is still a paucity of knowledge concerning the space in time between the days of tramping as discussed by Adler and the non-institutionalized backpackers originally identified by Cohen. This lack of understanding or knowledge may be attributed to the lack of focus on unconventional forms of travel at the time which Cohen (1972) indicated was the impetus for his inquiry into the non-traditional itinerant backpackers whom he began to come across during his travels.

Contemporary backpackers appeared on the tourism landscape “sometime after the Second World War in Western Europe when students and other middle-class youth began to hitch-hike their way around the continent” (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995, p.824). At the same time literary icons of the beat generation were traveling the world (e.g. Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Kerouac) exposing their readers to the overseas experience while contributing to the ushering in of the counterculture of the 1960’s. Tourism studies began appearing in academic journals focusing on the “tourists” whom at the time were profiled as a group quite different than that of the “hippies”. Cohen (1973) saw the heterogeneous approach to profiling tourists as not representative of what he
came across in his travels. This led to his creation of a typology which highlighted different types of institutional and non-institutional travelers. His 1973 article *Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter-Tourism* began what today is known as backpacker studies. The drifter, one of two categories of non-institutional travelers, was defined as a:

Type of international tourist who ventures farthest away from the beaten track…He shuns any kind of connection with the tourist establishment…He tends to make it wholly on his own, living with the people and often taking odd-jobs to keep himself going. He tries to live the way the people he visits live…The drifter has no fixed itinerary or timetable and no well-defined goals of travel. He is almost wholly immersed in his host culture. (p.89)

The drifters were portrayed as counterculture hippie-type youth traveling in pursuit of hedonistic recreation and motivated by alienation from and disenchantment with Western society (Cohen, 1973). At the time a well formulated backpacker trail formed stretching from London through to India with many extending their ‘hippie trail’ itinerary into Southeast Asian and Oceanic countries. While Cohen provided a conceptualization of the drifters, Teas (1974) and Vogt (1976) were credited with identifying the form and function of the backpacker ‘subculture’ and its nuances.

Teas (1974) elaborated on the drifter framework presented by Cohen (1972) through identification of backpacking as a lifestyle shared by a community of travelers replete with unique signs of in-group status, daily rituals, and unique characteristics signaling unofficial membership in this unique group of travelers. Her data collection, from 1967 until 1972 occurred at the same time as Cohen’s (1972), both complementing each others work through differing approaches. Since that time backpacker researchers
have referred to the backpackers as a subculture as defined through its unique characteristics.

Subculture has been defined as a sub-sector of a cultural group brought together through shared behaviors, symbols, and understandings that are created, negotiated and diffused throughout the subculture (Fine & Kleinman, 1979). Richards and Wilson (2004) stated that the postmodern tourism milieu is composed of clearly identifiable groups characterized by their shared values and behavior. While the term subculture is utilized throughout the literature, the term community was ascribed to the backpackers in this dissertation as there were questions raised as to whether the backpackers are in actuality a subculture. The backpacker community is characterized through identifiable language, informal information exchange, recreational activities, and music (Gibson & Connell, 2003). Murphy (2001) found similar characteristics of the backpacker community albeit at the time she found no substantive language unique to the backpackers. This community of travelers is further defined by their resilience to travel in the face of global and localized threats such as war, terrorism, and crime showing little or no fluctuation in destination demands prior to, during, or after events that are shown to impact upon the travel plans of other types of travelers (Hunter-Jones et al., 2007; West, 2005).

Vogt (1976) contributed to understanding the backpacker community through the identification of intense social interactions unique to this community. This type of interaction stems from a sense of immediacy fuelled by the traveler’s anonymity and the lack of time associated with building of relationships occurring in one’s home society.
The social contracts of their home societies in terms of social protocol are negated while on the road with the backpacker community covertly subscribing to its own system of social protocol. Vogt indicated this posed a potential problem for the backpackers returning to their homeland as their intense ways of building, reinforcing, and discarding relationships while on the road were likely to carry over. As few studies have reflected on the return home there is little evidence to support this claim.

Another attribute of these relationships is that the backpackers are stripped of their ‘home’ identity (e.g. occupation, education level) with marks of identity, status and prestige associated with the home society culture becoming invalid or minimized in importance and replaced with in-group membership, status, and prestige which is lauded on persons based on their traveling lifestyle. Markers include destinations visited, time on the road, modes of transport utilized, and unique signs of freedom/independence. Difficult journeys capture the hallmarks of backpacking in terms of status, prestige, and self-growth and as Vogt (1976) stated, “the need to overcome hardships and challenges when traveling usually an inhibitor for most, is a motivation for wanderers” (p.29).

Status and prestige as motivators are not only determined and constructed by reference groups back home but also within the backpacker community themselves leading to a surreptitious hierarchy determined from within the backpacker community which can be viewed through the theoretical framework of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). The backpacker community contains hardcore backpackers as well as amateurs with the differences based on status markers earned while on the road. Research indicates status is based on the difficulty of a persons travels determining how hardcore a
backpacker really is. The same goes for experiences gleaned within visited destinations. For example, those who have traveled overland from Panama to Columbia traversing the Darien Gap on foot would likely be accorded higher status than a person who took a ship circumnavigating what is considered one of the most difficult areas in the world to traverse.

The mode of transport, the experiences had, and the places visited all contribute to determining where in the backpacker hierarchy a person is located. “Backpackers ‘rough it’ not only for budgetary reasons, but also out of a deep-seated mental association between material comfort and inauthenticity (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003). According to Pryer (1997):

With motivation and prestige being of vital importance to travelers, each traveler subgroup has a tolerance limit with respect to prices, the quality of accommodation and food they can afford, numbers and types of travelers they expect to meet and the extent of the superstructure provided. If the superstructure becomes too developed, the experience will become unchallenging resulting in little prestige attached in visiting the destination. (p.232)

Travel is utilized as a surreptitious marker of where on the social ladder a person is within their reference groups (Krippendorf, 1984). The characteristics determining the status one’s travels hold amongst fellow backpackers is, according to Graburn (1983), based on distance, exoticism, crisis overcome, and variety of tourism experiences. These characteristics are directly related to destinations sought after based on the perceived types of experiences that can be engaged in.

The changing status of a destination is not arbitrary yet structurally connected to class competition, prestige hierarchies, and changing lifestyles (Graburn, 1983). Shifts in destination desirability are not solely influenced by the backpacker community but
simultaneously influenced by external forces such as the state of the economy, political and social upheavals, access to areas, costs, and increasingly, marketing. Each of these forces is relative to both the host country as well as to the backpackers’ country of origin. Cohen (1988) and MacCannell (1992) argued that the search for authentic experiences is at the crux of motivations to travel and that traveler’s gain status and prestige through touring of authentic landscapes (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003)

Veblen’s (1899) seminal book, The Theory of the Leisure Class, conceptualized that differences between people can no longer be shown at face value. MacCannell (1976) built on Veblen in his book The Tourist: Theory of the Leisure Class stating that experiences are a demarcation of status and prestige more so than physical objects as societies place value upon experiences that are neither inherent nor tangible. Recently, O’Sullivan (2003) suggested the United States is reaping what corporate ‘America’ has sown through turning the culture into one based on the consumption of commodities used to fulfill needs that have been replaced by commodities, a dependent cycle through which people’s lifestyles are manufactured by advertisers and corporations. “Consumption becomes the predominant motif of that culture. Corporate interests capitalizing on this psyche vulnerability and disconnection, sell products by offering the image of connection with others through the purchase of various commodities and lifestyles (O’Sullivan, 2003, p.328).

As the studies of the 1970’s were responsible for the commencement of backpacker studies, the lack of prior backpacker research resulted in most studies of the period being exploratory. The motivations, characteristics, and lifestyle of the backpacker
were identified as well as the unique characteristics of the backpacker community as a whole. There was a consensus amongst the researchers of the time that the backpackers were considered hedonistic global wanderers personified through their drug use and counterculture behavior while simultaneously motivated by a sense of alienation from their home societies and a search for self-growth through travel.

The 1980’s were similar to the 1970’s in terms of research output focusing on backpacker travels. Adler (1985) and Towner (1985) contributed to a better understanding of the backpackers through their historical analyses. Towner focused on the Grand Tour while Adler documented a larger swath of time concentrating on the 1600’s through the 1970’s. Together they presented a solid picture of the evolution of backpacking except for the time period from post World War II until the 1960’s with this time period still in need of investigation.

While few backpacker studies were appearing in the literature, this time period did provide a turning point for backpacker studies occurring with the findings of Riley (1988) indicating the hedonistic portrayal of backpackers was not a valid representation of the backpackers. Studying the backpackers in the South Pacific and Asian backpacker circuits, she found most did not drift aimlessly without concern for destinations and local populations, they were not beggars as earlier studies indicated, and they did not partake in hedonistic and anarchistic lifestyles as previously portrayed. There is a faction of the backpacker community that currently participates in this form of recreational travel yet it does not appear to be the majority. While the hedonistic lifestyles associated with the ingrained romantic vision of backpackers gleaned from the drifters of the 1960’s and
1970’s has dissipated as a reflection of reality for many backpackers, there is still a portion of the community, typically young, perpetuating the hedonistic stereotype. In Europe this type of backpacker heads to Ibiza, Mykonos, Barcelona, or Berlin, and in Asia it may be Kho Phangan, Goa, Fiji, Kuta, or the Gilli Islands. They are identified as more motivated by the party culture than the local culture although there is the presence of the middle-ground backpacker whom balances the hedonistic scene (e.g. full moon parties) with cultural touring.

Further research indicates backpackers in general tend to be well educated and from the middle class (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2001; Sorensen, 2003; Teas, 1974), time rich (Richards, 1999), value freedom and independence (Sorensen, 1999), prefer to travel alone (Riley, 1988), dislike the mass tourist circuit (Murphy, 2001), tend to make their own arrangements (Sorensen, 2003), seek adventurous journeys (Battacharyya, 1997), and tend to have multi-destination itineraries (Sorensen, 2003). The multi-destination itineraries are likely to be unstructured, focused on experiencing the local lifestyle (Loker, 1993), and include activities focusing on adventure, nature, or culture (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). Recent research indicates many of the characteristics are attributed to age. Early backpacker studies were conducted under the assumption that backpackers were young with a common delimitation of twenty-five years and younger to qualify as a backpacker. It is questioned whether this delimitation was attached to a reliable sampling frame in regards to accurately representing the backpacker community at the time.
Further characteristics of the backpacker community include intense social interactions (Murphy, 2001), cheap travel (Teas, 1974), higher economic contributions than most ‘markets’ (Cooper, et al., 2004; Oppermann and Chon, 1997), intense bargaining (Muzaini, 2006), a sense of community (Sorensen, 2003) and the use of guidebooks (Battacharyya, 1997; Culler, 1981; Richards & Wilson, 2004; Sutcliffe, 1997). Backpackers tend to shop locally, stay in locally owned accommodations, and contribute to craft industries (Cohen, 1982; Newlands, 2005; Scheyvens, 2002). Purchasing locally made goods and services is linked to both necessity as well as the lack of choice in many of the developing areas the backpackers visit.

Until the 1990’s, the majority of backpacker research focused on itineraries reflecting the countries along the Hippie Trail from Europe to India and Southeast Asia. In the 1990’s, Australia and New Zealand were brought into the fold of the backpacker circuit attracting inbound backpackers as well as providing a source of outbound backpackers. Pearce (1990), of James Cook University in Australia, brought the term backpacker to the academic literature identifying these travelers based on their behavioral characteristics as well as their lucrative contribution to the tourism economy. He found backpackers in Australia were staying eight months on the average, twenty-five percent staying approximately a year, and forty-nine percent intended to stay for three or more months (p.24). He identified a potentially lucrative ‘market’ which provided an attractive framework that encouraged government and industry to become involved with its development with the intention of profiting from it through catering to it. His array of studies during the time focused on the motivations and behaviors of the backpackers.
arguably turning the backpacker community into a commodity of economic value.

Through focusing on research contributing to the management, control, and development of the backpackers and the backpacker community, he is arguably one of the forefathers of institutionalized backpacker travel. Ateljevic (2008) credits Pearce with shifting the backpacking community from a de-marketing to a marketing paradigm.

The transformation from a de-marketed community to a marketed one is indicated through the deteriorating distance between tourists and backpackers reinforced by a growing legion of backpackers traveling inside the ‘Lonely Planet bubble’ (Giesbers, 2002), a reference to the guidebook series as having created a separate environmental bubble in which certain types of backpackers undergo their backpacking experience. Research indicates an increasing angst associated with the symbolism attached to the guidebook series arguing it contributes to the growth of market oriented research through encouraging industry to provide induced goods and services with the focus on profits while simultaneously narrowing the gap between tourists and backpackers (Welk, 2008). Azarya stated “the search has been for the exotic, for the remote, and it has been shared not by a few adventurers, as before, but by increasing masses, by ordinary people. Service providers that cater to this surging new consumption have grown in size and scope and lubricate that demand” (p.951).

Since Cohen’s initial ‘backpacker’ typology numerous typologies have emerged in the backpacker literature indicating the increasing variation in types of backpackers supporting the current consensus amongst backpacker researchers that the backpacker community is rapidly changing (Pearce, 2008) and is no longer as homogenous as
previously thought, or what previously existed (Ateljevic, 2004; Cohen, 2004). The increasing heterogeneity may be a response to the decreasing gap between backpackers and “tourists”, who ideologically the backpackers attempt to avoid and differentiate themselves from.

It was during the 1990’s that backpacker typologies were at the forefront of backpacker studies (e.g. Aramberri, 1991, Hartmann, 1991) and the identification of the backpackers as a market, as opposed to a community, was expanded. The definition of backpackers was further muddled as studies utilized disparate definitions with disparities primarily in the minimum length of the journey and the maximum age to be considered a backpacker. Pearce (1990) saw backpackers as traveling for a minimum of 4 months and five years later, with Loker-Murphy (1995) defined them as traveling a minimum of 4 months. Even though there were indications that backpackers were not as young as portrayed, as evidenced in the study by Riley (1988), studies continued to define backpackers as young, typically with the ceiling raised in some studies to twenty-nine although was still typically set at a maximum of twenty-five years old.

The definition of a backpacker is the most common area of contested discourse and is the most important in terms of moving forward with the understanding of this community. This issue is exasperated by the dynamic backpacker community, characteristically and geographically, hampering the ability to concretely set parameters as to who is considered a backpacker. Sampling frames are problematic and until recently there has been an overemphasis on data collection occurring in backpacker enclaves and along the circuits where researchers know they will have a viable sample from which to
draw. This practice illuminates the problem of sampling from a specific type of backpacker (Wilson, et al., 2008). Recent studies indicate the internet may be instrumental in overcoming the sampling problems found on the road albeit the internet as a data collection tool brings with it its own set of problems (Speed, 2008).

The full time drifters were and are in the minority in regards to representation and whether that is due to their elusive nature, located so far off the travel routes that they are unaccounted for, or that they don’t exist in large numbers is debatable and difficult to substantiate. It is argued however that the full time drifter, as defined by Cohen, is hardly a feasible travel style in today’s politico-social climate due to restrictions placed on travelers hampering their ability to drift from place to place without any forward planning.

Constriction on mobilities are represented by visa restrictions, proof of funds for entry into countries, government sanctioned tourist routes, necessity for documented pre-planned itineraries and airline security restrictions contribute to a complex system of constraints. “Fears of illicit mobilities and their attendant risks increasingly determine logistics of governance and liability protection within both the public and private sectors” (Ateljevic & Hannam, 2008, p.253). Cederholm (1999) viewed ‘real’ backpacking, traditionally represented by drifter journeys, as a dying art form.

The art of backpacking may not be dying but instead may be seeing its form and function reflect a new paradigm of backpacker travel mirroring global societal changes. As Cohen (1973) and others thereafter note, backpackers are a reflection of the societies from whence they come and the twenty-first century is no different. Backpacker literature
since the turn of the century has been focused on the feminist perspective associated with
the backpacker experience, mobilities, critical theory, the deconstruction of geo-spatial
boundaries resulting in ephemeral global communities, and the shift away from
positivistic studies towards more relativistic, humanistic areas of research.

The twenty first century ushered in the professionalization of backpacker studies
that has been cemented through its canon of literature resulting in a subfield of tourism
studies (Cohen, 2004). Research in the 1990’s was characterized as a period of growth in
backpacker studies overly concerned with market oriented studies at the expense of
understanding the humanistic aspect of backpacking. “The desire to market, manage, and
increasingly predict (backpacker) tourist behavior goes some way to explain the relative
dominance of the quasi-positivistic tourist studies filed up until the turn of the last
century” (Ateljevic & Hannam, 2008). They further argued that the field of backpacker
research is at a critical juncture in which studies need to focus more on the relationships
between macro level institutions such as home, communities, globalization, and the
backpackers all of which are tackled, to some degree, in this dissertation.

Postmodern deconstruction of the backpackers is prevalent throughout the
backpacker literature as most backpacker researchers concede that earlier treatment of
backpackers as a homogenous group is outdated due to the community’s growth in size
and scope (Cohen, 2004; Pearce, 2008; Scheyvens, 2002; Uriely, Yonay, & Simchai,
2002). “Claims that previously posited backpackers as a generic group have been
replaced with models treating them as a series of subcultures, in which subjects
simultaneously occupy or move between multiple, various, and sometimes contradictory subject-positions” (Winger, 2006, p.105).

The loss of homogeneity may be a symptom of globalization resulting in more people participating in travel by a wider variety of people as they have greater access to economic capital and travel opportunities, are less ground to socially constructed institutions with their accompanying limitations, and are living in a time in which hypermobility is socially acceptable and in many cases, necessary. MacCannell (1976), in his definition of modernity, stated it “is the breaking up of the ‘leisure class’, capturing its fragments and distributing them to everyone” (p.37) that is at the crux of modern day travel.

While heterogeneity is on the rise within the backpacker community, there is still a core group of backpackers that have consistently been participating in backpacking, mainly those who emanate from societies in which backpacking has become a rite of passage. Rites of passage are culturally defined experiences engaged in by persons of a society symbolizing the process of moving from one ‘life stage’ to another. Van Gennep (1960) in his book *The Rites of Passage* suggested there are three primary stages through which a person progressed while undergoing a rite of passage. The first stage was that of separation where one leaves their normal environment for one which is novel and challenging. The second was the liminal stage where the person was metaphorically in a space, which has limited rules, customs, and values. The third stage was reentry into a new space at a new time as a ‘new’ person.
Rites of passage is one of the most common theoretical frameworks used to approach the study of the backpacker experience reflecting assumptions that backpackers are young as well as the assumption they are participating in the process of moving from one life stage to another via their travel experiences (Cohen, 2004). Rites of passage have the propensity to occur at critical junctures in life as elucidated in Erikson’s life stages model and while some are purely symbolic others denote that an acumen of skills or a canon of knowledge have been acquired initiating their passing from one stage in life to another (Maoz, 2006). Literature utilizing rites-of-passage is found throughout many fields of inquiry and identify numerous events as rites of passage including graduation, marriage, retirement, job loss, loss of a spouse, and mid-life crises. White and White (2004) used the rites of passage framework to look at long-term travelers in the Australian outback finding that many of them were between careers, were experiencing the empty nest syndrome, or were burned out and needed a change.

While the United States in general lacks rites of passage associated with travel, other societies and cultures view the travel experience as signifying a process of moving from one life stage to another in society. Understanding the role of cultural meaning placed upon the act of travel is essential in understanding the practice of travel associated with a society or culture. Globally speaking, societies are responsible for dictating what meaning is placed upon the travel experiences whereas some societies view travel as a recreational activity participated in by a few at specific times, other societies may view it as instrumental to livelihoods participated in by everyone. Exemplifying a culturally bound rites of passage is the cultural custom, the ‘Walkabout’, the partaking in a
maturation experience expected of young men affiliated with the aboriginal Bindaboo tribe of Australia. This necessary rite of passage was performed via a lengthy independent transitional experience in which young members of society communes with the outback in a test for survival resulting in growth through physical and mental challenges (Marshall, 1959). The experience intended to instigate the maturation process in which upon return to their home communities would provide the skills and maturity to contribute to their home society (Gibbons, 1974).

Historically, the rites of passage for 16th and 17th century youth of British aristocratic families were common, marking the transition from youth to adult. This rite of passage was carried out through the aforementioned extended journeys, referred to as the ‘Grand Tour’, considered a right of passage for the elite resulting in a polishing of cultural collateral expected for persons to gain entry into the aristocratic circles of the time. Similar to the rites-of-passage associated with the Grand Tour, some societies of the twenty-first century have come to accept and/or expect upon graduation from the military, high school, or college that it will be followed up by an extensive journey abroad, often referred to as the overseas experience (Bell, 2002; Wilson, et al., 2008), gap year (O’Reilly, 2006), or the big trip (Maoz, 2005). Considered a rite of passage, these journeys are participated in for varying lengths of time although longer journeys are more prevalent than shorter. Reflecting the freedom from their everyday lives and the institutions by which their actions and thoughts were societally curtailed, these travelers form a community of nomadic wanderers referred to as the backpackers.
Throughout the world backpackers are on extended journeys, which for some are consciously pursuing a journey of transformation (Maoz, 2008) while for others they may be unconsciously traversing through what has become a rite of passage (Shulman, et al, 2006). The backpacker literature indicates the impetus for many travelers to partake in extended journeys includes the existence of a life crisis, typically associated with older backpackers, or a rite of passage, usually associated with the younger backpackers who are on journeys bridging youth with adulthood. “The discussion about whether or not backpacking is a rite de passage is problematicised by the fact that very little attention has been paid in the literature to the return home” (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

An exception to this is the research conducted on the Israeli backpacker experience (see Noy, 2006). Israeli backpackers are one of the most researched subgroups of the backpacker community and recent research has looked into the rites of passage of this sub-sector of the backpacker community. Upon completion of mandatory Israeli military service the majority of service personnel take to the road prior to returning Israel, usually to pursue higher education back home (Noy & Cohen, 2005). Referred to as “the big trip” (Maoz, 2005), Bar-Hamburger approximates there are 30,000 Israelis annually navigating the world (as cited in Shulman, et al., 2006). Considered a rites de passage for this group, long-term international travel is an acceptable and culturally expected practice, considered to be the first experience of unstructured or unfettered existence. Israeli military personnel, until the time of the ‘big trip’, are bound by the structured and regulated environs of school and then the military. The independence they experience in
their ‘big trip’ is tested and negotiated in foreign lands that provide the environs to grow, experiment, and mature.

Shulman, et al. (2006) interviewed Israeli backpackers after the completion of their journeys, conducting focus groups consisting of students aged 22-26 (p.235). It was found that their travels increased their self-identity and self-confidence through self-testing by entering into difficult situations that were challenging with a challenging experience equating to a meaningful one. In addition, the authors interviewed the parents of the travelers and found that a third viewed the travels as having no impact on their children while the rest “claimed that the journey had a major impact on their child with regard to self-confidence, responsibility, and the ability to make decisions independently” (p.241).

Recent movements in the literature towards expansion of spatial representation has occurred with studies conducted in South Africa (Niggel & Benson, 2008), Malaysia (Ian & Musa, 2008), Scotland (Cave et al., 2008) and Russia (Zuev, 2008). The literature indicates there is a core cluster of countries represented in the majority of studies indicating the need to expand into further geographical areas. Geographical representation of backpackers has until recently been based on the profile being that of Western travelers (Teo & Long, 2006). With the global shifts in economic resources, social mobilities, and accessible leisure opportunities to a greater number of people, this oversight is currently being tackled in the literature and will arguably be a growing focus of backpacker research for years to come.
Movement in terms of spatial representation is mirrored by the increase in studies identifying a cross-over from backpackers to other forms of overseas travel experiences as exemplified in the increase in workers and students abroad (Jarvis & Peel, 2008; Newlands, 2006; Wilson, et al., 2008). Until recently these areas were relatively extant from the backpacker literature, or were covertly included in data collection, with students abroad having its own canon of literature, a result of studies being conducted from around the same time the backpacker literature appeared in the tourism literature. The primary problem is whether the overlap is a case of muddling and ill-defined parameters compounded by the lack of agreement in defining who is and isn’t a backpacker or whether it’s a reflection of the current backpacker landscape (Kain & King, 2004).

Backpackers of today participate in various activities throughout the course of their overseas journeys. Work, volunteerism, and study abroad experiences are all capable of inclusion in their overall itineraries. The participants in this study indicated the dichotomy of work versus leisure was bridged into a lifestyle representing a paradigm shift away from the protestant work ethic based model in which work takes precedence over leisure to one that is tipped in the other direction and represented by the postmodern backpackers. The word postmodern when referring to the backpackers represents a paradigm shift in the ways and means in which backpacking is presently occurring. The myriad of experiences are matched by a myriad of participants. Age, income, motivations, nationalities, activities, length of journeys are more heterogeneous than previously found and whether this is a result of changes in the backpacker scene or the
increase in backpacker research focused on areas and aspects of the backpacker experience previously unexplored is unknown.

2.6 Working Holidays

A contingency of international backpackers reflect similar travel characteristics of earlier day trampers. The most common characteristic is the transient nature of their travels which, for many, is financed through manual labor jobs typically unsustainable through local human resources and/or is seasonal in nature. “Students on world tours represent a workforce that tends to accept nonstandard working conditions and contracting” (Hjalager, 2007, p.449). Working holiday schemes have proven beneficial for countries such as Australia (Cooper, et al., 2004) and New Zealand (Newland, 2005) indicating a progressive understanding by policy makers of the positive contributions backpackers can make towards filling in for regional and local human resource deficiencies. Reciprocal benefits include, on the host country part, a fulfillment of manpower needs which cannot be met by local populations, a cross-cultural experience between host nationals and backpackers whom perpetuate the exchange of ideas and approach to work, and provides an economic boost to localities in which these backpackers spend their time and money.

Backpackers incorporating work, volunteer or paid, into their itineraries benefit from the ability to experience a country more in-depth which the literature indicates is a primary motivation for many backpackers. The ability to immerse themselves into another culture is similar to the experiences of the seventeenth and eighteenth century trampers who “placed a premium upon sharing the daily life of a country’s people”
(Adler, 1985, p.337). In a study on backpacker workers in New Zealand, rating their working holiday “respondents felt they had developed an appreciation of other cultures ranking it highly (5.06) but this trails their success at learning more about New Zealand way of life (5.90) and some personal goals including a desire for more travel (5.71)” (Newlands, 2005, p.13).

Uriely and Reichel (2000) found the way in which work and tourism are approached by the traveler impacts the host-guest relationship and the overall experience. In their study of working travelers in Israel, they found that some traveled in order to work and others worked in order to travel and the success of the relationship between host and guess was contingent upon the understanding from both parties on how either party approached the relationship. If one side of the relationship took an instrumental approach with economic gain as the motive and the other party entered the relationship motivated by the socio-cultural exchange, there was potential for conflict. Uriely (2001) identified these two types of guests as working tourists and traveling workers.

Backpackers working at a juncture in their sojourns abroad are becoming more popular which can be attributed to several reasons (Newlands, 2006). First, government visa programs offering legal short-term employment are increasingly available for more destinations and for longer periods of time. Second, an increasing number of backpackers are taking around-the-world trips, sometimes lasting for up to a year or more, thus employment opportunities are being sought as a means for the replenishment of funds to continue their journey. Pape (1964) referred to this as ‘touristry’ basing it on her research of traveling nurses who she found to be working to travel while traveling with the work
as a secondary motivator. Third, backpackers are noted to be motivated by living with the locals and working in a foreign culture contributing to status within the backpacker community as it is an indicator of experiencing immersion into a culture outside of the tourist experience. Mustonen (2005) in his study on volunteer tourism considered the volunteer tourists as “…a kind of backpacker who, from a postmodern point of view want to differentiate themselves from conventional backpackers, and who finally end up being postmodern pilgrims” (p.161). Fourth, working in an area differentiates the backpackers from the tourists as well as other backpackers. Fifth, the cost of international travel for many is increasing as higher-end infrastructure and superstructure are put into more places where dual tourism economies once existed, the institutionalized and non-institutionalized.

The dualistic character of postmodern backpacking represents a shift away from dichotomies such as participation in work or leisure, but not both, to a more integrated approach to backpacking. Mobilities is an area of backpacker research starting to surface in the backpacker literature and is based on the premise that lifestyles in general are becoming more mobile and that travel should not be viewed as something distinct from everyday life (Ateljevic & Hannam, 2008). Where people work, visit, or attend school is no longer compartmentalized by nationalistic boundaries but instead the approaches to mobility are viewed from a global perspective, asking where in the world will the needs of the participant be met.
2.7 Study Abroad

Study abroad programs are increasing in popularity amongst students from the United States. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 223,534 U.S. students studied abroad, an 8.5% increase from the year before and a 150% increase from a decade earlier which saw less than 90,000 students from the U.S. studying abroad for academic credit (Institute of International Education, 2007). Studying abroad has grown in importance over the years with college programs realizing the necessity for internationally competent graduates.

Some universities have taken the helm in terms of realizing the importance of a global curriculum and have met the challenge through unique means. Mirroring the global mission of the University of Denver, plans are to eventually mandate the participation in study abroad programs by all students prior to graduation (Bollag, 2004). Princeton University is rolling out plans to have in place by the 2009-2010 school year a program where up to ten percent of their incoming freshman will spend a year, between high school and college, overseas where they will work on social-service projects (Newmarker, 2008). According to the Institute of International Education, the program is purportedly the first of its kind in the country and will provide the “chance to serve others while learning about the world” (p.E3). The article offers no data to back up assumptions of outcomes but instead is theoretical and a shift in the typical educational paradigm. It is assumed that these two programs are at the forefront of what will be a larger movement towards mandating overseas experiences as part of an undergraduate education.

Study abroad programs are a good start to creating awareness of worldviews although efforts should not rest on this type of program. As aforementioned, Princeton
University is stepping it up a notch through mandating of volunteer experiences abroad. One of the potential reasons for the low participation of backpackers from the United States in the backpacking world is gaining the support of people and institutions that don’t understand what the experience is. Legitimacy of the backpacker experience is perceived to be a barrier to participation in it. If universities incorporated a semester abroad or year abroad program mirroring the structure, or lack of structure, of the backpacking experience it would conceivably lend credibility to the practice and potentially lead to increased participation in it.

In terms of socio-cultural acceptance, it is argued that study abroad programs are institutionalized and a socially accepted means through which to see the world. In the United States, if a person stated they were taking off for a year abroad with no or minimal purpose compared to a person taking part in a formalized study abroad program, the likelihood of acceptance is higher. The possibility exists that people in places like the United States who want to participate in backpacking may not get the support, socially or financially, to partake in such adventures independently so they turn to study abroad programs to help legitimize their sojourns abroad. If research studies disqualify participants based upon participation in a study abroad program, this potentially disqualifies a number of persons identifying as backpackers yet needed to participate in institutionalized programs to guise what otherwise may be considered backpacker travels.

A dilemma for researchers is whether to risk including all study-abroad participants in samples for backpacker studies thus casting the net too widely and failing to capture the actual backpacker community or whether to risk not including them as they
potentially are a large portion of the overseas backpacker market from the United States. Balancing the two assertions is the decision of the researcher and for this dissertation, the decision was to include those who have studied abroad yet have backpacked independent of the programs they were enrolled in.

Students are assumed to not have the same time allotment as backpackers thus it is argued that there may be significant differences between students traveling overseas and backpackers although the line between the two is murky and questionable of whether the line needs to exist due to the overlapping of the activities. Research on the travel preferences of university students is minimal (Shoham, Schrage, & Van Eeden, 2004) thus comparisons between and within the student travel and backpacker groups is difficult and outside the scope of this dissertation.

2.8 Size and Scope of the Backpacker Phenomena

In 1997 Alex Garland published his first novel, The Beach, telling the story of an elusive utopia located within the Thai islands known to a select group of backpackers. The book has become a metaphor for the backpacker community in that it provides a window into the elusive and nomadic nature of the backpackers who in general are purposefully traveling and living outside the norms of their home society. Their ability and propensity to operate in the margins of society presents a dilemma for researchers resulting in their inability to reliably ascertain numbers indicating the magnitude of the backpacker community (Gladstone, 2005).

International backpackers are ephemeral, dynamic, and hypermobile, creating a globally based community lacking geographic boundaries contributing to the inability to
substantiate the magnitude of its membership. Porous community membership has consistently been a characteristic of this oscillating travel lifestyle which may contribute to the lack of studies indicating, or estimating, the overall size of the community. The number of backpackers navigating the world is difficult to ascertain with the difficulties impacting the identity of numbers associated with specific nationalities, including those from the United States. Few countries consistently collect data on backpackers with the oft sited exceptions of Australia and New Zealand.

The 2006 Tourism Research Australia International Visitor Survey indicated 545,000 international visitors to Australia stayed in a backpacker accommodation a minimum of one night, the only defining characteristic to be considered a backpacker according to Tourism Australia (“Backpacker Accommodation in Australia,” 2006). This number was an increase from the 499,000 reported in 2005, 482,000 in 2004, and 468,000 in 2003 (p.1). The definition of a backpacker by Tourism Australia captures a broader spectrum of travelers than typically associated with most backpacker studies. Those on short-term trips, single-country itineraries, or participating in study abroad programs are potentially included in the Tourism Australia data sets.

Australia, a well established backpacker destination, attracts backpackers from the United States yet they are under-represented relative to country population size and the representation of backpackers of other nationalities. The 2006 International Visitor Survey indicated that of 545,000 backpackers visiting, 43,000 (8%) were from the United States and 22,000 were from Canada (4%). The two countries tend to be amalgamated in the majority of backpacker studies reflecting one category, those from North America. A
review of 83 backpacker journal articles and 31 book chapters focusing on backpacking garnered less than 25 studies with methodologies and statistics transparent enough to extrapolate the number of backpackers from the United States (see Appendix A). Studies separating backpackers from the United States and those from Canada are a minority yet those in existence indicate a higher proportion of Canadian backpackers.

Problems associated with North American countries represented as a single category are not isolated. Backpackers from the United Kingdom and Ireland separately have a high presence within the backpacker community yet the two are treated as a single category in many studies, while justifiably separated in others. Europe, if not including the United Kingdom, tends to have the highest proportion of backpackers emanating from Germany, France, and the Nordic counties and while typically identified through regional areas of Europe, there are studies which combine all of the countries, including those of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Oceania, New Zealand and Australia tend to be clumped together albeit each having disparate population sizes as well as differing backpacker markets. Hofstede (2007) identified this problem as on-going in cross-cultural research.

In an extensive review of the backpacker literature canon, the United Kingdom consistently ranked as the largest cohort of backpackers in backpacker studies conducted throughout Australia and New Zealand. One reason may be the low cultural distance between the countries attributed to their shared membership in the commonwealth. This may also offer an explanation as to why Canadian backpackers tend to have a higher percentage of backpackers represented in studies than those from the United States.
Membership in the commonwealth also provides reciprocal work opportunities that other countries, such as the United States, have not been privileged to partake in until recently.

Australian working-holiday programs began in 1975 initially offering working holiday visas for 18-26 British residents later expanding the program to twelve countries and increasing the age limit to 30 (Clarke, 2005). Reciprocal working visa programs between countries invariably impacts the number of young visitors traveling through Australia as indicated in the study by Wilson, Richards, and MacDonnell (2008). They found the top sources of inbound working holiday visa holders to Australia from 2003-2004 were, in order, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Japan, Germany, Canada, and the Netherlands.

In October 2007, a reciprocal working-holiday agreement between the United States and Australia was finalized and is estimated to attract 30,000 applicants annually (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). This program will likely increase the number of backpackers from the U.S. traveling to Australia while reciprocally increasing their presence in backpacker study samples. While those on working-holiday visas do not automatically identify as backpackers by default in most studies, those on working-holiday visas do show a propensity to travel prior to, during, or after their work (Newlands, 2006).

Work for backpackers comes in different forms including picking fruit (Cooper et al., 2004) and working on organic farms (McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2006), and is typically a means to help fund further travel. There are indications that working overseas as part of the postmodern travel experience is perceived as a means for deeper cultural
immersion. Learning about cultures at the local level is identified as one of the top motivations for backpackers traveling overseas and is equated to a more authentic experience (Allon, 2004).

The earliest backpacker studies of the 1970’s indicated a high presence of backpackers from the United States yet the research presented no evidenced as to how these conclusions were substantiated. The decline in representation over the years is a complex one with the literature absent of reasoning, and until recently, a lack of awareness of this problem. Theoretically there are many reasons that can account for the lack of U.S. representation in backpacker studies. First, areas of data collection are concentrated in Australia, New Zealand, and to a lesser extent, Southeast Asia. These areas are generally not visited by the majority of travelers originating from the United States. In 2006, forty percent of outbound travelers from the United States visited Europe, seventeen percent visited Asia, and three percent visited Oceania. (Office of Travel Tourism Industries, 2006). The relative distance between the United States and Europe, as well as the costs associated with transport, are relatively low compared to trips to Oceania and Asia. These reasons combined with the perceived cultural distance between Asia and the United States may contribute to the differential between areas visited.

Wilson, et al., (2008) indicated that while “backpacker tourism originated” (p.114) in Europe, there are a lack of studies on backpacking in Europe stating “this is an area of research that deserves more attention and should include travel from other non-European generating regions such as North America, South Africa, and perhaps even South America” (p.126). Bereft of empirical evidence, the assumption is made that
backpackers from the United States may be more prevalent in this area of the world thus if more backpacker studies are completed in Europe this may illuminate cohorts traditionally under-represented in geographically disparate locations.

The term backpacking holds various meanings throughout the world and while the localized lexicon of those in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Asia generally associate the term with budget travelers, those in the United States and other areas of the world may not. Pearce (2007, 2008) was the first to make the distinction in the backpacker literature stating “the context and meaning of the term backpacking in this study follows the European, Asian and Australian use of the term rather than its North American counterpart” (p.1). The lack of familiarity with the term used by the researcher may impact the size and scope of the response rates to requests for study participants. Dependent upon the methodology utilized to acquire participants, study recruitment is invariably a source of who does and does not participate. The transparency of participant recruitment is missing from much of the backpacker literature and there is a propensity for backpacker studies to gloss over the description of the recruitment process. This oversight results in the lack of providing a point from which to indicate whether this may contribute to the low representation of backpackers from the United States in backpacker studies

Compounding recruitment problems for backpacker studies is the question of whether or not these travelers self-identify as a backpacker, and if so, what the term personifies. “Definitions are usually externally derived, and the ‘backpackers’ themselves are rarely asked if they see themselves as backpackers or not’(Wilson & Richards, 2008,
Kanning (2006) asked participants to self-identify with differing labels identified throughout backpacker research to represent the backpackers and found nearly half identified with the term backpacker while the rest with either traveler, budget traveler, or in some cases, tourist. There is an increasing angst amongst backpackers to not be labeled as such as it is increasingly identified with institutionalized travel (Welk, 2004, 2008; Winger, 2006).

The definition of a backpacker is inconsistent throughout the literature hampering the ability to make comparisons between studies. Definitions vary in terms of the type of accommodation, length of stay, and the number of countries visited required in order to be considered a backpacker. Some studies indicate a minimum of a week is necessary to be considered a backpacker while others include only those on the road for a minimum of one year. The use of backpacker accommodation as a criterion sometimes excludes those staying with friends or family, camping, or using other modes of accommodation which may include a large portion of the backpacker population in certain countries. Similarly, some studies include all forms of accommodation. Those backpacking in one country on single destination trips are sometimes excluded or included depending upon the researcher, the research design, and the question(s) trying to be answered. This issue contributes to the problem of identifying the size of the backpacker community.

The majority of issues outlined thus far are barriers to understanding the true size and scope of the backpacker community yet one tool that holds promise in terms of understanding the size of the backpacker community is the internet. Use of the internet allows for global reach and as studies increasingly utilize this mode of data collection in
backpacker studies, it will likely bring to the surface representative samples from differing nationalities, including those from the United States, which may not have been acquired through in-person intercepts.

Speed (2008) found 33.2% of her sample recruited on-line were from the United States and Canada. “The large proportion of North Americans is likely to be attributable to the use of the Internet to distribute the questionnaire. The only other backpacker study (Helbert, 2002) experiencing such a high North American representation also used an online questionnaire methodology” (Speed, 2008, p.70), a student under Speed’s tutelage. The reliability of their findings in terms of backpackers from the United States is undermined by the amalgamation of Canada and the United States into a single category. A further limitation of Helbert’s research was that the data collection occurred in 2000 and 2001 at which time the accessibility or popularity of the internet may have been skewed towards North American users.

Arguments surrounding the procurement of finite numbers need to take into consideration potential intervening variables. Working-holiday visa programs, backpacker self-identification, inclusion/exclusion of participants based on pre-conceived delimitations, contextual variables impacting data intercept points, and lack of consistency amongst studies are amongst some of the issues hampering the acquisition of valid and reliable numbers of backpackers. Identifying backpackers from the United States must also take into consideration the perceived and real socio-cultural barriers associated with longer-term backpacker travel, the utilization of study abroad programs
as a possible guise for legitimizing extended travels abroad, and the lack of working-holiday opportunities available to them.

The lack of consensus amongst backpacker researchers and the backpacker industry regarding many areas of backpacker studies hampers the ability to accurately determine the size of the backpacker community, including the number of backpackers from the United States who have participated in it or are currently participating in it. The problems are not isolated to backpacker studies with the same issues of identifying numbers influencing the area of volunteer tourism research (Mustonen, 2005). Based on the numbers extrapolated from the backpacker literature, no attempt is made here to determine the number of backpackers from the United States. The lack of studies on the United States backpackers provides impetus for this study as supported by the call from Richards and Wilson (2004) for studies to be conducted in geographical regions currently unexamined.

Issues affecting the ability to determine the size and scope of the backpacker community are similar in determining their economic impact on visited destinations. Backpacker travel has been given little attention in the past due to the lack of industry knowledge regarding this type of travel relying on unsubstantiated assumptions, usually negative, regarding economic and social impacts of the backpacker community (Hampton, 1998; Jarvis, 1991; Vogt, 1976). While exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, there is growing support and evidence that backpackers contribute more to destinations than mass tourists which correlates with the duration of the backpacker journey (Cooper et al., 2004; Oppermann & Chon, 1997).
Backpackers are generally on the road for longer periods relative to mass tourism markets (Wilson, et al. 2008d). Numbers associated with the length of stay of backpackers are contingent upon the delimitations of the studies. Some studies focus on single-country journeys while others are all-inclusive focusing on the entire journey comprised of multiple destinations including those traveling up to a year or longer. Single-country studies identifying the length of time within the country include Ian & Musa (2008) indicating an average of 19.5 days in Malaysia, Kanning (2006) showing an average of 73 days in New Zealand, Jarvis (1995) showing an average of 195 days in Australia, and Murphy (1999) indicating an average of 173 days in Australia. For multiple destination journeys, Westerhausen (2002) indicated an average of 365 days and Binder (2004) found 339 days was the average, both referring to backpackers intercepted in Southeast Asia. These numbers are questionable as several of them are presented absent of delimitations set prior to data collection.

On a governmental level, Australia and New Zealand consistently collect reliable data on the backpacker market. Tourism Research Australia (2006) indicated the average length of stay for backpackers was 72 nights with average expenditures of $A5161, more than double that of the non-backpackers who on the average spent $A2448. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism (2006), in 2005, “the average length of stay per backpacker was 30.5 days, compared to 19.3 days for non-backpackers” (p.2). Contrary to Australia, backpacker expenditures in New Zealand consistently indicate a near equal expenditure between backpackers and non-backpackers. To be considered a backpacker for data collection purposes, the New Zealand government defined them as travelers
staying a minimum of 30% of their in-country stay in backpacker accommodations. The Australian government defined a backpacker as anyone traveling through Australia staying in a backpacker accommodation a minimum of one night.

Economic impacts, indicated solely through expenditure data, fail to provide an accurate understanding of the economic contributions backpackers make to destinations visited. It is argued here that the beneficiaries of tourism expenditures are just as, if not more so, important to acknowledge as it is to know the amalgamated economic numbers. Backpackers tend to shop locally, stay in locally owned accommodations, and contribute to craft industries (Scheyvens, 2006). As part of the non-institutionalized, or peripheral, tourism economy, the economic leakage is minimized with profits centralized within communities ultimately contributing to community empowerment and sustainability. The impacts are determined to be much greater on areas where the “communities are small, unsophisticated, and isolated” (Pearce, 1982, p.208).

Purchases made as part of the institutionalized tourism sector have the propensity to contribute to tourism organizations and investors external to the areas visited (Cohen, 1982; Madrigal, 1995). Economic injection on behalf of visitors to host communities is suffused as profits shift to third parties and in the process contributes to further commoditization of destinations for tourist consumption. As globalization increases and the free market takes hold, communities unable to culturally relate to or are insufficiently trained to navigate the free market are found to be at a disadvantage especially when competing with developers and industry backed by investors focused on returns on their investments. Wearing, et al. (2005) indicate that the those who advocate for sustainable
tourism development in which communities are at the forefront of decision making benefit through changes occurring from within instead of from outside.

For many developing nations, there is lack of community based capital to fund tourist infrastructure and superstructure for the high-end tourists thus reliance upon outside capital becomes necessary, if targeting mass tourists, which leads to loss of community control and profits. “Local communities do not usually have the skills, experience or resources to provide services for the top end of the tourism market themselves, thus in worst-case scenarios, such communities miss out completely on the benefits of tourism ventures in their own backpackers” (Scheyvens, 2002a, p.147).

Characteristic of the backpackers, they tend to pursue multi-destination itineraries off-the-beaten track resulting in a wider spatial dissemination of economic impacts than single destination journeys. Simultaneously the backpackers contribute to a slash and burn development trajectory through its continuous identification of new destinations. Destinations are socially created and are attributed meaning by people based on features they find attractive, unattractive, of value, and authentic. “Young travelers have the power to determine which places are brought into the tourist economy (and which places are excluded), which put simply means incorporating those places which conform to notions of authenticity. Secondly young travelers determine the terms by which people and places are included in the tourist economy” (Desforges, 1998, p.183).

Impacts are not held in the economic realm but are also found within the natural and socio-cultural environs of destinations. Taking the triple-bottom line approach which consists of evaluating social, environmental, and economic impacts tied to development
is an increasing practice yet it must be questioned as to who conducts the evaluations, for
what reasons, and with inclusion of which stakeholders (Elkington, 1997). Destinations
have been shown to reap negative effects when the locals are not empowered through the
local community development process yet emigration, loss of livelihoods, loss of land,
loss of culture, commoditization of culture and an overall loss of lifestyle continue under
inorganic, industry led tourism development (Trousdale, 1999).

As indicated through research conducted in Boracay, the Gilli Islands, Ubud, Goa,
Ko Samui, Ko Phangan, and Pai, backpacker destinations have the propensity to reach a
stage of development where backpackers feel unwelcome or are no longer welcome, the
environs originally attracting them is stripped of its appeal, and visits by backpackers
becomes economically infeasible. Outside developers are shown to infiltrate areas in
which backpackers commence the gentrification process and in a surreptitious manner
eventually cleanse the areas of visitors not exemplifying those targeted in strategic
planning (e.g., Carter, 2004). Misunderstanding or ignorance of the backpacker
community contributes to the lack of destinations including backpackers in their pursued
countries have in the past sought to upgrade the tourism services of localities that are
popular with backpackers or to put restrictions on backpacking visits” (p.43). Many
governments purposefully thwart the entrance of (e.g. Bhutan and Dubai) or continuation
of backpackers visiting their country (e.g. Thailand and Vietnam).

Development of ‘quality tourism’ in developing countries typically occurs after
the initial identification of destination attractiveness is consecrated by the backpackers
Outside business entities become attracted to areas that exude potential where for many destinations the potential would not exist without the initial determination by backpackers that an area holds value. Without community planning and supporting policies in place, development can proceed unabated with the backpackers and local residents eventually extrapolated from the area (Cohen, 1995). The backpacker literature suggests that the turnover in destinations sought by backpackers may not be a result of their constantly seeking new destinations but rather is a response to the encroachment from institutionalized tourism.

Referring to Cohen’s (1973) original tourist typology separating tourists into institutional and non-institutional tourists, the literature is rife with arguments pertaining to whether or not backpacking exists as an alternative form of institutional tourism. In recent years development of products and services aimed at profiting from the backpacker community have increased (Azarya, 2004). Chain hostels, budget airlines, and on-off busses are all signs indicating the increased commercial activity surrounding the marketing of and to the backpackers. Richards and Wilson (2004) in their book, *The Global Nomad*, offered a snapshot of commercial services available to postmodern backpackers:

Backpackers World has a number of branches in Sydney, Melbourne, and other Australian cities offering a one-stop shop for all backpacker needs: an employment agency, a travel agency, an accommodation-finding service, boards with job adverts, vehicles for sale, expatriate food items, a lecture room for briefings, employment orientation schemes, and assistance with visas and work permits. Staff will collect backpackers from the airport, give them an orientation briefing, provide details of the job they have arranged for them, and drop them at their accommodation. (p.266)
As indicated, changes in the backpacker community shows a shift away from non-institutionalized, peripheral travel supporting local community development towards an increase in the use of chain backpacker accommodations and mass transport aimed at the backpacker ‘market’. On-off busses are an increasingly popular form of transport for people wanting flexibility in their travels yet not wanting the discomforts and/or inconvenience of potentially inconsistent local transport.

The ‘Baz Bus of South Africa (Visser, 2003) and the Kiwi Experience of New Zealand (Vance, 2004) are examples of modern-day transport plying backpacker circuits leaving travelers at pre-determined restaurants or accommodations with a commission structure in place for the driver. This system provides the backpacker with a mobile ‘environmental bubble’ shielding them from the potential pitfalls of ‘independent’ travel as well as potential cross-cultural experiences with the locals along the route. Tending to cover a wide geographical area and working together, sometimes under one organizational umbrella, chain accommodations and mass transport organizations tend to profit from the backpackers at the expense of cutting the locals out of the economic chain. Until recently the amount of leakage has been one primary differential between institutional and non-institutional travelers and like the backpackers themselves, the businesses serving this community are seeing a narrowing of the gap between institutional and non-institutional businesses simultaneously narrowing the scope of people and organizations financially benefiting from them (Azarya, 2004).
2.9 Motivations

Push and pull factors influencing backpacker travel includes alienation (Ateljevic, 2008; Cohen, 1972; Westerhausen, 2002), life crisis (Maoz, 2008), rites of passage (Graburn, 1983), and dissatisfaction with homeland (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2001). Further factors include freedom, independence, a sense of community, socialization, novelty, challenge (Elsrud, 2001), change, identity, low cost lifestyles, and recuperation/solitude (Cohen, 1972). Motivations are impacted by age (Maoz, 2008), culture (Prideaux & Shiga, 2007), life stage (Hillman, 1999), and previous travel experiences (Desforges, 1998; Pearce & Lee, 2005). “There is consensus that a grasp of “motivation” tells us “why” an individual or group have behaved or are about to perform an action” (Kay, 2003, p.600) yet with the backpacker community there is a transparent disconnect between motivations and actual behavior (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Binder (2004) found there are five motivations: experience as the ‘other’, community experience, distinction, renunciation, and self-development. These motivations closely resemble the theses of Veblen’s (1899) *Theory of the Leisure Class*, and MacCannel’s (1976) *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* in which the Western world was viewed as becoming increasingly mass-oriented and one of the primary ways in which people attempt to differentiate themselves from the masses was through travel. The journey itself turns into a form of cultural capital. Where destination choice once provided a singular marker of distinction, this is no longer a strong indicator on its own and is now coupled with experiences within destinations enabling the traveler to stand out from others.
Destinations noted for adventure activities amongst the backpackers vary based on region, itineraries, and the shifting benchmarks of what is considered adventurous relative to the backpacker community. Purnell (2005) stated “adventure is not seen as something extreme, but something that distinguishes the backpacker from their social group back home” (p.2). There is general agreement that adventure can be a means for compensating for the status absconded upon those who travel to “exotic” destinations but because exotic destinations have become less distinguishing through mass access and ease of travel, the need to differentiate within social groups may take on differing forms within the tourism experience instead of the tourism destination being the primary marker of status.

For backpackers, motivations vary throughout their extended journeys with destination choices reflecting their needs at a fixed point in their journeys. Some destinations are sought out for their adventurous activities while others for their refuge from the road (Cohen, 1982). Kanning (2006) found choice of activities was linked to destination image constructed from within the backpacker community yet invariably influenced by external forces. He found in Rotorua, New Zealand, that marketing of the city to backpackers as an adventure destination was an attempt at capitalization on what was perceived to be the primary draw to the city, that was in actuality a disconnect in that the backpackers visited the area to meet their needs for rest and relaxation rather than a place to engage in adventure activities.

Age is a variable under increasing scrutiny as it has long been a central delimitation placed on studies typically favoring younger backpackers and has been
indicated to influence their motivations and activities. This long-held assumption has recently been shown to not be a valid characteristic defining the backpackers. Recent studies focused on older backpackers have become transparent in the literature with researcher by Maoz (2008) and Cochrane (2005) at the forefront of this research stream. Age is one indicator that this is a problem in which back in the 1980’s there were already signs that backpackers were not necessarily young (Riley, 1988).

Richards and Wilson (2004) identified the risk of researcher classification versus self-determination by the backpackers. Ironically in their global study on the backpackers their sampling frame was gleaned from travel agents catering to the young independent travel market. First, there is the problem of the travel agency which personifies institutionalized travel through its purpose of providing structure to unstructured journeys. The second is that these travel agencies cater to a specific age group which perpetuates the myth that backpackers are young.

Moaz (2004) found there was a significant difference in motivations between younger and older backpackers. The younger backpackers tended to be recreational tourists with little regard for the learning about local cultures visited; not only did they indicate little interest, they tended to disrespect the cultures visited. This was dichotomous to the older backpackers from Israel who traveled to explore cultures and was viewed as respectful of the local culture in the process. Her work supported earlier claims by Cohen (1982) who found the division between younger and older backpackers along the same lines, the sex-sand-surf recreation versus the cultural enrichment dichotomy.
Pearce and Lee (2005) found a positive relationship between a person’s travel career and the motivation to seek out cultural experiences. Motives change over time and as a person passes through their “travel career” these motives tend to change, many times in direct relation with their stage in life (Ryan, 1998). The decisions on where to travel take into account past travels and experiences as well as the reference groups one is part of. Sorensen (1999) indicated younger backpackers are drawn to Europe, North America, New Zealand and Australia supporting the findings of Richards & Wilson (2004) in their study of young backpackers which found as travel experiences increased, so did the distance from their normal place of residence. The Middle East, Central America, and Asia were identified as buffer regions harboring a mix of both younger and older backpackers while South America and Sub-Saharan Africa were regions primarily aligned with backpackers who were relatively well traveled and in their mid to late 20’s.

Older travelers are increasingly participating in, or continuing, the travel styles of the backpackers albeit with differing motivations than those of the younger, more transparent backpackers (Maoz, 2004; Newlands, 2004). Known as “Backpacker Plus” (Cochrane, 2005) or flashpackers (Pursall, 2005), this segment of the backpacker community is growing in numbers with an increasing presence along the backpacker routes and in backpacker studies (Kanning, 2006). Characterized by unique motivations, demographics, and expectations relative to the younger backpackers, older backpackers are creating demand for more up-market products and services than what the average backpacker expects, wants, or can afford (Hurt, 2006; Pursall, 2005).
The term ‘flashpackers’, according to Pursall (2005), was originally coined by Future Laboratory, a trend forecasting agency based out of London (p.1). From the Future Laboratory (2004) report, ‘flashpackers’ were defined as:

Shunning the traditional and impersonal nature of a week in the Costa del Somewhere, flashpackers are backpackers who travel in style. Busting the budget and traveling in the lap of luxury is the only way to travel. Flashpackers are looking for the authentic travel experience but, unlike the traditional gap year student, can afford to splash out on some of life’s luxuries when the going on the road gets tough. (p.13) This definition reflects the same difficulties surrounding the defining of backpackers. The definition supplied was not quantifiable in its present form, was not constructed by the backpackers themselves, and was largely ambiguous thus able to be applied to many types of travelers.

Flashpackers tend to be prior backpackers who previously ventured out as backpackers in their youth and are returning to the backpacker community but in the form of a flashpacker. The flashpacker differs demographically from the average backpacker in that they are characterized as likely to be in their thirties or forties, financially stable, and on a sabbatical from their career (Bleach & Schofield, 2004). People in their thirties, forties, or fifties are not typically known to take off on long-term trips with reasons primarily tied to family and career responsibilities (Robertson, 2007). As societal institutions and life stage benchmarks become amorphous or obsolete, the socio-cultural and career pressures are weakened resulting in potentially greater social acceptance and lower barriers to extended travel opportunities.

In a study of ‘long-term travelers’ Ateljevic & Doorne (2001) found that the heterogeneity of the backpackers is much wider than anticipated. In a study of
backpackers in New Zealand, they find that many of the backpackers were older, generally in their 30’s or older, and were at differing life stages than younger backpackers. The older long-term backpackers, or flashpackers, were identified by their dislike for western lifestyles coupled with their tendency to have lost control of their lives thus sought out travel as a means to rejuvenate or reconfigure their lives. As for the younger more mainstream backpackers, the long-term travelers portend to distance themselves from them as they are perceived to lack similar values, travel motivations, and travel styles (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2001).

Maoz (2008) looked at female backpackers in their forties and fifties who traveled through India. She found they were motivated by turning points in their lives including changes in careers, relationships, and self-identity. Backpacking offered the traveler the arena in which to engage with the self without the social baggage attached to their expected roles back in their home country. While the journeys were identified as changing them, Maoz indicated that eventually they reverted back to their old selves while holding on, nostalgically, to the liminal space they occupied in the moratorium they experienced from modern day rituals and life. Self-growth is identified in the literature as a common motivation for older backpackers while self-growth amongst the younger backpackers is not necessarily a motivation but there are indications it is an outcome of their overseas experience.

In further studies by Maoz (2004, 2008), she identified differences between younger and older Israeli backpackers, referred to as settlers and conquerors. The settlers were in their 30’s or older, were experienced backpackers, and were motivated by self
development and alienation from their home society rather than by the recreational hedonism characteristic of the younger conquerors. The conquerors approached their travels as an extension of their military service. They were regimented, group-oriented, socializing with other Israelis, and were inward-oriented. Younger Israeli backpackers tended to be “secluded from the environment, detached from the locals, characterized by patronizing behavior, while keeping a firm environment bubble of ‘Israeliness’ (Maoz, 2004, p.120). Conquerors earned a reputation [amongst locals and other backpackers] as being aggressive, cheap, and impatient (Hottola, 1999, p.77) while moving in insular packs along well-defined circuits (Avrahami, 2001).

The backpacker industry is aware of the shift in backpacking styles associated with the changing demographics of the backpackers resulting in many businesses shifting the accommodation model to suit the demands of this relatively new type of clientele (Wicks, 2006). Changes include increasing the availability of single-sex floors as well as the inclusion of more private rooms as this new group is better able, and willing, to pay for the relative luxury. The increasingly diverse options for accommodation are being met with the development of increasingly larger scale, institutionalized backpacker accommodations (Wilson, et al., 2008) acting as enclaves, not unlike all-inclusive resorts catering to mass tourism.

2.10 Backpacker Enclaves

Enclave visitation is an important component of the backpacker experience and understanding its relevance within the context of the overall backpacker journey is necessary if one is to understand the backpacker community (Wilson & Richards, 2008).
Enclaves, also referred to as ghettos (Krippendorf, 1984), environmental bubbles (Judd, 1999), and ‘metaworlds’ (Hottola, 2005), provide functional, recreational, and psychological benefits for travelers through offering liminal spaces in which navigation of self-identity, alternative recreational pursuits, and in-group socializing may occur. Enclaves are viewed as spaces in which the backpacker community is rejuvenated, reinforced, and maintained (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Howard (2007) defined a backpacker enclave as “an area with at least 10 relatively closely spaced and relatively inexpensive guesthouses/hotels/hostels, of any size, patronized partly by backpackers” (p.77) differentiating them from backpacker areas which he defined as “any area with at least one guesthouse, patronized partly by backpackers” (p.77). While Cohen (2004) indicated differences may exist between urban and rural backpacker enclaves, enclaves are generally associated with delineated urban areas which Timothy (2002) likened to the form and function of urban ethnic enclaves.

Backpackers utilize enclaves as wayfaring stations between destinations while for some institutionalized travelers, the enclave is the destination. Functionally, backpacker enclaves meet the economic, social, and recreational needs through their offering of relatively cheap food and accommodations, cafes and bars (Lloyd, 2003), transportation and visa services, and social networking opportunities (Riley, 1988). These concentrated tourist spaces provide social and psychological havens for travelers in which to interact with fellow backpackers, find comfort in the familiar, and regain a sense of control they may have relinquished or lost in the course of their dealings with complex and potentially
overwhelming cultural environs of the host country being visited (Hottola, 2008; Vogt, 1976).

Two primary forms of enclaves exist: emergent and induced. Emergent enclaves evolve naturally and are characterized by a lack of purposeful planning, initial slow growth, and centralized local community control. Emergent enclaves have the propensity to surface in developing countries or areas where controlled zoning or restrictions are relatively lax or non-existent. Emergent backpacker enclaves tend to be organic rather than induced mirroring the unstructured qualities of the backpacker community in general (Jenkins, 1982).

Alternatively, induced enclaves are purposefully planned concentrated areas in which development is government or industry-led with specific desired outcomes at the forefront of decision making. As the destination lifecycle (Butler, 1980) progresses organically rooted enclaves have the propensity to gentrify through induced development as exemplified by Ko Samui (Westerhausen, 2002), Goa (Wilson, 1997), Lombok/Gilli Islands (Kamsma & Bras, 2000) and Pai (Cohen, 2005) typically resulting in the eventual exodus of backpackers and the ushering in of more psycho-centric travelers.

One of the benefits attributed to enclave tourism is its perceived ability to manage and control visitors with the positive and negative impacts becoming centralized in the process. Enclaves provide psychological and social separation between the tourists and locals creating liminal zones where suspension of social strictures placed on them in their place of origin as well as those placed on them by the host country results in behaviors
that may not be acceptable in either cultural space external to the enclaves. Krippendorf (1984), an advocate of tourist enclaves stated:

Tourism in reservations, in ghetto-like centers may be the most hygienic solution, because the destination area can benefit from all the economic advantages, while restricting contact to a limited area and a small circle of people and thus protect itself from the overwhelming ecological, and, even more importantly, cultural infection. (p.125)

Few studies focus on backpacker enclaves with the exceptions of Hottola (2005, 2008) and Howard (2005, 2007). Hottola (2005, 2008) identified enclaves as ‘metaworlds’ in which sanctuaries from the host culture were presented along a continuum and used at varying times and to varying degrees to help control for lack of control experienced in the host country. Howard (2005, 2007) was the first to explore the evolution of the Khao San Road area, an iconic enclave in South East Asia considered synonymous with the backpacker community resulting in an informative view on the myriad of factors impacting the organic development of this quintessential backpacker enclave.

An icon within the backpacker world, Khao San Road is a physical and social space catering to the backpackers through their recreational and logistical offerings for backpackers traveling throughout Southeast Asia (Teo & Leong, 2006). Orlean (2000) attributes its popularity to its being perceived as the “safest, easiest, most Westernized place from which to launch a trip through Asia” (p.38). The road, and now the surrounding area of Banglamphu, has risen from a residential area in the 1980’s (Askew, 2002) to an area catering primarily to the backpackers.
Until recently Khao San Road has been an interesting anomaly relative to other emergent backpacker enclaves in its endurance in encapsulating the areas character in the face of internal and external pressures by the backpacker community as well as planners and developers. Gentrification is impacting upon the area as signaled by the appearance of spas, transnational coffee shops, global chain restaurants, and boutique hotels unofficially declaring the institutionalization of backpacking (Purnell, 2007) arguably meeting the needs and wants of the flashpackers.

Backpacker ghettos while offering a place of respite, rejuvenation, and/or recreation for the backpackers, are also places of contested identity played out in social environments seemingly void of social constriction sometimes resulting in a source of tension between the backpackers and the local community. Ghettos are characteristically associated with a high concentration of backpackers congregating in a relatively small area, representing a foreign entity to most communities in which they transiently reside. The high concentration of backpackers and their seemingly hedonistic behaviors within these liminally characterized enclaves creating a transparent image that has arguably become the engrossed portrayal of the backpacker culture.

Cohen (2004) indicated that modern day “backpackers are often condemned for their appearance, conduct- especially sexual freedom and use of drugs- superficiality, stinginess, and seclusion in backpacker enclaves” (p.43). Scheyvens (2002) argued that it is in the backpacker ghettos that the backpackers tend to forego their cultural sensitivity and norms in exchange for hedonistic pursuits such as drug taking. Drug taking, a common recreational activity amongst backpackers, has been rarely tackled in the
literature with the exception of recent contributions by Uriely, et al. (2006) and Belhassen, et al. (2007).

The hedonism portrayed in many backpacker studies reflects the romantic vision portrayed in the novels *Are You Experienced?* (Sutcliffe, 1997), *The Backpacker* (Harris, 2001), and *The Beach* (Garland, 1996), all of which are considered important contributions to the backpacker’s literature canon. The novels depict a romantic view of backpacking through the use of the ‘drifter’ style backpacker which many aspire to emulate yet few succeed at. Drug use amongst the backpackers is a common occurrence in the novels as well as in many destinations in which backpackers travel.

Uriely, et al. (2006) suggested that backpackers consuming drugs do so under the pretense they are doing so in areas in which they are considered immune to the legal consequences facing local drug users. The backpackers view the “tourist space” in which they temporarily reside as having separate rules and regulations that are not based on their home country laws or those of their host country. Baslhassen, et al. (2007) in their study of backpacker drug use questioned the socio-culturally constructed meanings attached to cannabis. They indicated cannabis is widely assumed to be a deviant and abnormal activity yet the questions raised by the authors were who decides it is a deviant activity and what are the underlying reasons for determining its deviance. The recreational use of cannabis within the context of differing cultures and within the backpacker community indicated perceptions of its symbolic definition were relative to the society or group in which it was consumed.
The findings of the study showed that backpackers who used drugs while traveling fell into four motivational categories: experimentation, pleasure orientation, quest for authenticity, and purchasing (p.309). The study indicated motivations ranged from the instrumental, where the primary purpose was to purchase the drug to take back to their home country through to recreational motivations whereas the novelty of its use was the impetus for its use.

Accompanying drug use is the culturally inappropriate activities or actions that are destination specific. Howard (2007) found a primary source of tension in an Indonesian backpacker ghetto was the culturally inappropriate dress of primarily women backpackers. Dress has been identified as a means to differentiate the backpacker from the tourists (Muzaini, 2006) which according to Elsrud (2001) is accomplished through dressing down rather than up. Through attempting to distinguish themselves from tourists the backpackers are sometimes offending the locals in the process.

Kuta Beach in Bali, Indonesia, is another example where backpackers were identified as negatively impacting upon visited areas. Culturally ignorant behaviors associated with hedonistic activities such as drunkenness, sexual proclivity, and condescending treatment of the locals were identified as contributing to the motivations behind the 2002 Bali bombings of two night clubs in Kuta killing hundreds of backpackers (Coward, 2003). This contributed to the reinforcement of an image of the backpackers that is neither generalizable nor wholly accurate. The backpackers frequenting Kuta tend to be younger, on shorter breaks, and there for sun, sand and sex unlike long-term and/or older backpackers who in general are prone to be more interested
and motivated by cultural immersion and participation in activities away from the backpacker enclaves or circuit (Cohen, 1982; Maoz, 2004).

The sexual mores of backpackers have received little attention in the backpacker literature although a view into the sexual mores of travelers while on vacation can be garnered through interdisciplinary studies. In the only study directly focusing on backpacker sexual activities, Egan (2001) found that more than a quarter of backpackers engaged in casual sex, defined as “having sexual intercourse with someone new whom they had just met that day or evening” (p.43). It was suggested that the socially unrestricted environment in which much backpacker travel occurs may enhance the possibility and opportunity for engagement in sexual activities that may otherwise not be engaged in back in one’s home society (Eiser & Ford, 1995).

In a study of five unique backpacker enclaves throughout Asia and Australia, Howard (2007) found the majority of enclaves were pursued for their offering of low-key socialization and relaxation prior to returning the road. The dichotomy between the hedonism associated with enclaves and the sedateness of others has yet to be investigated. There is evidence that some enclaves are ‘working’ enclaves in that the majority of backpackers are semi-permanent visitors staying for longer periods of time usually associated with employment. Enclaves are not viewed as dichotomous but rather situated along a continuum with some catering to the longer-term visitors while others are geared towards the short-term transient backpackers.

In their study of backpacker enclaves in Bondi Beach, Australia, Wilson, et al. (2005, 2005a) used stakeholder theory to explore the relationship between the backpacker
enclaves and the local community. They identified tensions emanating from the establishment and use of illegal or unregulated backpacker accommodations. Supply and demand for unregulated accommodations may be a cause, as well as a symptom of the working holiday visa program which finds backpackers needing cheap accommodations for relatively long periods of time. The backpacker literature indicates enclaves are typically utilized for up to a couple of days prior to moving on to the next destination but “at the extreme end of the scale are those ‘travelers’ who are characterized by minimal movement, being largely motivated by existential and hedonistic factors. These transient travelers journey to an established centre and tend to remain there for months at a time before moving onto another centre” (Pryer, 1997, p.231) creating unique problems in their wake.

Allon (2004) found that some of the problems in Bondi, and other backpacker ghettos such as Coogee and Kings Cross, also in the Sydney area, were contributed to by the illegal dumping of cars and durable goods throughout the areas once their sojourns in Australia came to a close. “As a direct consequence of increasing community anxiety of the backpacker phenomenon, six local councils established a Backpacker Taskforce to address the particular issues that these areas face in relation to increasing numbers of visitors, particularly budget travelers and backpackers” (Allon, 2004, p.58).

2.11 Backpackers and Tourism Development

Backpackers and their relationship with tourism development has been an on-going albeit sporadic theme throughout the backpacker canon of literature with expansion occurring in recent years to include areas that have either been ignored or placed into
secondary positions. The understanding of the local communities and their perceptions of
the backpackers has been cited as requiring attention with research by Wilson and
Richards (2008) reinforcing the necessity through their case study of local communities
in Sydney doubling as backpacker havens.

Krippendorf (1984) noted a common theme throughout the tourism literature in
that travelers try to escape from or move away from something rather than go towards
something. In the case of the backpackers, it is a mix of the two. Backpackers may be
escaping from some aspect of society negatively impacting upon their everyday lives
while simultaneously drifting towards destinations and/or communities offering havens
of alternative lifestyles congruent with their ideals and values that they may not
encounter back home. Some of the earliest backpacker research indicated a drift of the
backpackers towards liberal havens reflecting the values of the backpackers (e.g.

Byron Bay in New South Wales, Australia, is one such destination perceived to
be synonymous with alternative lifestyles created and reinforced through characteristics
of the local and immigrant population which arguably hold values congruent with locals
contributing to the reinforcement of the areas identity, character, and sustainability
(Westerhausen & Macbeth, 2003). Firth and Hing (1999) argued the small craft tourism
industry in the form of small business is the key to Byron Bay’s identity and
attractiveness.

Since the 1970’s, alternative lifestyles have been practiced and embraced Byron
Bay creating and reinforcing the destination identity drawing thousands of backpackers
each year. In 2006, the Northern Rivers-Tropical region attracted 137,000 backpackers with Byron Bay, a community of 6,130 permanent residents, attracting the majority of them (Tourism Research Australia, 2007). It is argued there is a symbiosis between the backpackers and the local residents through the sharing of similar worldviews.

Byron Bay offers a unique environ unlike any other within Australia resulting in its point of difference, the lifestyle, being the primary draw. In the 1980’s the lifestyle and character of the area was under threat due to unprecedented, and arguably, unsustainable development. By the early 1990’s, the ‘Battle of Byron Bay’ represented the fracturing of the community identity through dividing the locals along the lines of whether increasing tourism detracted from the lifestyle which initially drew them to the area and the increasingly viable livelihoods attributed to the growth of tourism in the area. The pinnacle of the community fracture occurred with the planned development of a Club Med, eventually nixed and resulting in a development moratorium in 1995 (Westerhausen & Macbeth, 2003, p.81). The primary argument was that the infrastructure and superstructure were unable to accommodate the growing number of tourists and migrant residents attracted to the region. Accompanying this concern was the loss of identity as a lifestyle community priding itself on its alternative roots. In 2006 the development moratorium was lifted and justified through determining the infrastructure was able to accommodate further capacity (Christiansen, 2006).

The Tourism Area Lifecycle (TLC) model by Butler (1980) contends that destinations progress through phases. The phases are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, and stagnation followed by disparate phases ranging from
rejuvenation to decline. Backpackers are considered at the forefront of tourism destination development with high visibility in the initial phases of the lifecycle (Hampton, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002, 2006) where a lack of developed infrastructure/superstructure was considered a barrier to mass tourism visitation simultaneously attracting backpackers for this very reason.

It is argued that the type of backpacker visiting an area will change the demand for the area whereas the first backpackers consider themselves the “true” backpackers yet as the destination becomes popular amongst mass backpackers; it begins to lose its perceived exoticness. This may include changes in modes of transport to reach the destination, the availability and quality of accommodation, the availability of Western medical care, the availability of differing food, and/or the increased presence of basic commodities many people take for granted such as clean drinking water, electricity, and functional toilets.

As the destination progresses through stages of development, gentrification of areas becomes increasingly prevalent simultaneously leading to levels of development sought after by more traditional tourist markets. The demand for goods and services shifts from supply led to demand led while also shifting the locus of control from communities to that of the travelers/tourists. As destinations become Westernized, reflected in the availability of goods and services of the West, this perpetuates the cycle as the visitors seek out settings that are different than their usual place of residence (deButton, 2002).

Backpackers are noted to seek out the authentic, traditionally identified with travel to off-the-beaten track destinations. Boorstin (1987) viewed tourism as a mindless,
homogenized activity in which participants seek out antiseptic experiences he labeled pseudo-events. According to Boorstin, staging of attractions and events are the core of modern day tourist activities prompting a cyclical supply-demand mode in which attractions are staged or edited for consumer consumption. “The tourist seldom likes the authentic product of the foreign culture; he prefers his own provincial expectations” (p.106).

MacCannell (1976) disagreed with Boorstin by viewing tourists as seeking out authenticity yet not necessarily accessing it. Graburn suggested that backpackers were one of several sub-sectors of the tourism industry that were able to get close to authentic destinations (1995). MacCannel in *The Tourist* postulated that the middle class are the one’s alienated in Western Societies and they try to escape the inauthentic world but rather than finding it they are met by another inauthentic world. Marketers and destination managers create a pseudo world to meet the expectations of tourists thus creating an inauthentic milieu leading to the middle class possibly never being in contact with the real or authentic world they long for (Graburn, 2001).

MacCannell (1976) extended the front-stage back-stage framework of Goffman (1956) concluding that instead of the dichotomy, access to authentic experiences and environs is better understood along a phased continuum. According to Goffman, the front stage is the superficial, socially constructed area accessible to visitors somewhat mirroring the structure of the pseudo-event identified by Boorstin. The back stage however is protected and typically off-limits to outsiders as it is the arena in which daily life is played out in its stripped authentic form. While MacCannell used the framework,
he saw access to authenticity falling along a continuum, rather than a strict dichotomy, with each phase further increasing accessibility to the backstage area. The phases were dependent not only on the host’s construction or barriers to access but also to the motivations of the visitors that varied in terms of how authentic of an experience they want to be exposed to.

Authenticity, according to Huxley (2004), is defined as “the routine aspects of mundane quotidian existence, reproduced on an everyday basis, and located outside of the tourist centers and infrastructure” (p.43). The study indicated that backpackers encounter or engage with locals through “attending festivals, wearing local clothes, trying foods, listening to music, playing with children, watching local films, and driving through tiny villages in remote areas” (Huxley, 2004, p.39). Authenticity in relation to destination image may be partially defined as areas in which certain things and experiences are consumed and identified with specific places such as drug taking in Amsterdam (Poria, et al., 2003) or bungee jumping in New Zealand (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002). Authenticity in tourism studies typically associates the term with cultures and cultural bi-products yet this can be expanded to include authentic activities as well as authentic destinations.

Authenticity of a destination is dependent upon where in the journey or within a travel career of the participant a destination is approached from (May, 1996). The authenticity of a destination is likely viewed differently before a journey is taken as compared to during or after. Timmermans (2002) found authenticity is accorded on a destination based on the presence or lack thereof of other travelers. Features vary from
the perception of remoteness to the real or perceived authenticity of the destination to the landscape. Backpackers arguably seek off-the-beaten path destinations and once “found” will continue to attract backpackers until the character of the area changes or the tourist mix begins to change. With the emergence of the postmodern backpacker, off-the-beaten track “does not reflect geographical or cultural space so much as it indicates a desire to be away from other tourists, especially Western ones” (Winger, 2006, p.104).

McCannell (1989) argued that tourists seek out the authentic as a way of benchmarking their own place in the world. Sorensen (1999) concocted the term nostalgic evolutionism, which built upon MacCannell’s thoughts on authenticity. Nostalgic evolutionism “holds that the modern world has lost in authenticity what it has gained in commodities, but somewhere out there, on the fringes of or beyond the modern world, the authenticity of pre-modern life is still to be experienced” (Sorensen, 1999, p.23). It is argued that travels are utilized as a way to differentiate between social strata within and between classes. Through accumulation of travels, the destinations are commoditized into cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984) argued that class status is differentiated through the traveler’s choice of destinations and the practices of travel in those destinations. Thompson (1979) contended through his rubbish theory that the castoffs from the disadvantaged classes are collected, museumized, and turned into items of worth to the advantage of the new owners. The commoditization of these items gives them worth that were not initially accorded them (Pretes, 1995). “Tourist behavior and aspirations are direct or indirect indications of what is significant and meaningful in
people’s lives, or their self-perceptions, their class or group identity, and social aspirations” (Graburn, 1983, p.29).

2.12 Lonely Planet and Backpackers

Lonely Planet, started in 1973 by backpackers Tony and Maureen Wheeler, evolved into a global phenomena accounting for one-quarter of all English-language guidebook sales making it the world’s largest publisher of travel guides (Friend, 2005; Weissmann, 2005; Wheeler & Wheeler, 2005). Their guides are used around the world by postmodern backpackers offering travel guidance and in the process inducing demand for destinations and experiences resulting in mass pilgrimages by like-minded travelers seeking off-the-beaten track destinations. The ability to influence the choice of destinations visited by backpackers is shown to result in backpackers descending upon areas that may or not be ready, willing, or able to accommodate visitors. It is widely argued that Lonely Planet has been instrumental in changing the global tourism landscape through perpetuating the maturing of what was once considered a unique form of travel participated in by few people to what is now considered by many to be another form of mass tourism (Welk, 2004).

Backpackers are cognizant of the changes occurring as a result of the growing participation in this style of travel and in response the more ‘hard-core’ backpackers have become affiliated with a backpacker “angst” persona (Winger, 2006). The angst is acted upon through the rejection of Lonely Planet endorsed establishments, the shunning of the major backpacker routes, and the purposeful separation from other backpackers. “The image that the ‘better’ backpackers have of mainstream ones is equivalent to their general
image of conventional tourism” (Welk, 2008, p.89). The Lonely Planet guide has traditionally been a symbol of the backpacker (Pryer, 1997; Sutcliffe, 1997) but in recent years has increasingly become associated with the ‘institutionalized’ backpackers as opposed to the ‘non-institutionalized’ backpackers as reliance upon Lonely Planet guidebooks resulting in the guidebooks becoming “a symbol of the lesser traveler” (Sorenson, 2003, p.860).

Research on guidebooks has generally taken a content-analyses approach with a few notable contributions (e.g. Bhattacharyya, 1997; Lyon, 2005; McGregor, 2000). Lyon (2005) used semiotics analysis to explore the growth trajectory of backpacking through the analysis of a Lonely Planet guidebook series. The study commenced with evaluation of the initial 1973 guide, South-East Asia on a Budget, and followed the South-East Asia series through until 2004. He found the increase in “professionalization” of backpacking was positively correlated with the decrease in the degree of alienation and diversity of travel motivations as well as the increase in traveler types.

Lonely Planet is analogous of the backpackers in that through the years the guidebook series has evolved into a more professional and institutionalized part of the backpacking community both reflecting and contributing to the changes in the backpacker community. According to Horner and Swarbrooke (2004) the changes include a more formalized writing style, less emphasis on off-the-beaten track destinations, and more inclusion of mass tourism sites/destinations. “The books iconoclastic tone has been muted to cater to richer, fussier sorts of travelers, many of whom, like the Wheeler’s themselves, fly business class” (Friend, 2005, p.79). Tony and

Guidebooks perform similar functions as tour guides in that both are responsible for mediation between the traveler and the host society, ideally narrowing the cultural distance between the two. Therkelsen and Sorensen (2005) through the use of semi-structured interviews of travelers in Denmark produced a typology of guidebook users based on the function of the guidebooks: the information addict, the planner, and the functional minimalist. The information addict is interested in finding out as much information about the places visited; the planner uses it for functional purposes albeit with an in-depth mode of operandi, while the functional minimalist uses the guidebook sparingly to reference minimal functional information.

Kanning (2006) reported similar findings in his study of decision-making amongst backpackers traveling through Rotorua, New Zealand. Besides finding that uses varied between backpackers along the lines of the aforementioned typology, he found guidebooks were influential or very influential on the backpackers decision on whether to visit a destination. Guidebooks were viewed as instrumental in determining where people go, how they will get there, and what they will do upon arrival. Development of new destinations or the repositioning of existing ones can all be manipulated through the influence of the guidebook (Hampton, 1998; Westhausen & Macbeth, 2003). Dann (1999) indicated there is an angst amongst travel writers in terms of their cognizance that
they may be at the forefront of contributing to the unsustainability of tourism in its current form.

2.13 Backpackers and Literature

Guidebooks are not alone in their influence upon travel itineraries with literary tourism showing an increase in popularity perpetuated by classic as well as popular culture literature attracting amateur and serious readers alike. Herbert (2001) argued that literature has the ability to create literary haunts into sightseeing attractions and places of pilgrimage by impregnating built and/or natural sites with meaning previously barren of, or different from, previous meanings. Furthermore, he found there is an increase in literary tourism sites attracting literary pilgrims and casual visitors with casual visitors in the majority. In a study of two literary haunts in Wales, he found that if utilizing a strict definition of literary tourists, “no more than 15% would qualify as literary pilgrims at either site” (p.330).

From the time of printing of The Epic of Gilgamesh, “the first work of Western travel literature (transcribed in 1900 B.C.)” (Leed, 1991, p.6) to classic novels depicting the road less traveled such as On The Road by Jack Kerouac (1959), Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas by Hunter S. Thompson (1971), Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert Pirsig (1974), and The Beach by Alex Garland (1996), literature has contributed to the powerful mystique of alternative travel experiences. The literature is bereft of identifying links between backpacker itineraries and the literature but there is growing interest in the confluence between literature and backpacking.
Richards and Wilson (2004c) argued the backpacker literature lexicon provides insight into the backpacker community and the identity of the backpackers. Through analysis of authors identified as popular amongst the backpackers, their study found “the basic link between [these] authors remains their symbolic ability to stimulate others to travel” (p.143). The study contributed to understanding the backpacker community through identification of common themes which they found included tourist angst, alienation, anti-establishment, and search for authenticity in off-the-beaten track locations, overindulgence, excess, hedonism, and impulsiveness. The majority of the themes identified were no longer representing the average backpacker experience yet they do represent the romantic view of the backpacking experience of yesteryear personified by journeys of the original ‘drifters’.

Exploration of potential relationships between backpacking and popular culture has received little interest outside the few aforementioned studies. Popular culture novels such as *Eat, Live, Love* (Gilbert, 2006) follows a woman’s existential journey, brought on by mid-life crisis, through Italy, India, and Indonesia. Gilbert’s novel reflected the shifts occurring in modern day backpacking. The protagonist was a woman who independently traveled, in her mid-thirties, motivated through seeking respite from her job, country and ‘life’ mirroring those qualities identified by many travelers in the postmodern backpacker milieu (Maoz, 2008). The question needs to be asked whether these novels, and others like it, are catalysts for the increase in flashpacker travelers or tourism in general.
2.14 Summary

Backpacker research is still in its infancy stage yet gaining momentum as a research track for researchers overseas. The size and scope of this traveling community along with their ensuing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts indicates this little understood segment of the tourism milieu that has been under the radar for years should become an area of interest to all parties involved with tourism. Since the 1960’s, this field of research has been approached through two divergent paradigms reflecting the divide between qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Ateljevic & Hannam, 2008). The majority of empirical studies conducted on the backpacking community were approached through either anthropological methodologies focusing on understanding the meaning of backpacking and market-oriented, or positivistic traditions focusing on studies attempting to explicate information for management and marketing purposes (Pearce, 2008; Wilson & Richards, 2008). A tension exists between the market-driven research focused on controlling, managing, and empirically quantifying the backpacker community and research aimed at understanding the sociological and psychological aspects of the experience (Pearce, 2008). The results are often a “top-down” interpretation which misrepresents tourists” (Desforges, 2000, p.931). Attempts are being made to bridge the divide through use of triangulation methodologies (e.g. Pearce 2008, Wilson & Richards, 2008).

Models and frameworks utilized throughout the past thirty years identified the backpackers, their motivations, their travel habits, and their experiences while on the road. Throughout the evolution of backpacker studies one of the consistent themes is the
inconsistency of the backpackers. This self-mobilized, nomadic community of travelers is difficult to place into a box which may contribute to the increasing number of studies approaching the study of the backpacker community from a humanistic, relativist approach.

Cohen (2005) reinforced the need for more emic and reflexive approaches to backpacker studies allowing them to narrate, represent, and construct their realities. Cohen (2004) advocated for the sociological approach stating “there is also a need for reorientation of research on backpackers from the currently prevalent concern with their itineraries, traveling style and interactions to a more emic and reflexive approach concerned with the manner in which they themselves construct, represent, and narrate their experiences” (p.57). “Very rarely do academic studies record tourists, talking about what travel means to them” (May, 1996).

It should be understood that the backpackers experience is a subjective one with no two backpackers maneuvering through the same cognitively shifting landscape associated with the experience. Through the use of narrative interviews, one is able to gain insight into the influences of the backpacking experience on worldviews through the eyes of the backpackers themselves. Deandrea (2006) stated “neo-nomadism is based on the hypothesis that new forms of subjectivity and identity are being engendered under the post-identitarian predicament of globalization” (p.97). Deandrea argued that the correlation between modernity and marginality may be represented by the backpackers who tend to escape primarily Western cultures and what the cultures represent reflecting the arguments Cohen (1972, 1973) made many years earlier.
One of the deficiencies identified in the literature is that backpackers from the United States are underrepresented relative to the major backpacker-generating countries of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel. Researchers note this deficiency yet offer no explanation as to why it exists (Pearce, 2005; Wilson, 2005). The unique socio-cultural landscape backpackers from the United States leave from and return to are assumed to have a direct bearing on the way their journeys are perceived to have influenced their worldviews. As Morinis (1992) stated “experience must be analyzed in relation to social and cultural patterns, in the attempt to make sense of why certain experiences are common to some pilgrimages and not others” (p.17). This study contributes to the tourism literature on many different levels offering a the bedrock from which to build future understanding of backpackers from the United States as well as bringing insight into the process through which their worldviews were influenced.

The backpackers are a unique group of travelers forming a community of international nomads sharing in and creating the backpacking experience. The theoretical framework was composed of several theories presented to help understand the reflexivity of the researcher from which the study evolved. Experiential learning theory, transformation theory, and culture shock theory were all considered to shed light on the backpacker experience and while not guiding or shaping the rest of the dissertation, they were provided as an overall framework from which the journey can be viewed.

The following chapter provides a review of grounded theory, the methodology utilized to answer the research question- How are the worldviews of backpackers from the United States perceived to be influenced through their travel experiences? Grounded theory was determined to be a valid approach to the question based on its ability to explore and identify the processes through which their worldviews were influenced.
CHAPTER 3

GROUNDED THEORY

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the process through which worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States. Grounded theory was chosen based upon the epistemological and ontological views of the researcher, the research problem, the audience, the backpacker literature, and the desired outcomes.

3.1 Background

Grounded theory was designed to produce theoretical understanding grounded in data helping to explain, interpret, or predict phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory originated with the work of Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967) who studied the process of dying in hospitals and was a reaction to deductive theorizing that was prevalent at the time (Walker & Myrick, 2006). While their methodology was minimally used until the 1980’s, it has since become the leading qualitative methodology in healthcare studies (Denzin, 2004). It has since been used to guide research in diverse areas of inquiry including organizational management, tourism, leisure studies, education, gender studies, culture, deviance, and social issues (e.g., Belcher & Herr, 2005; Hardy, 2005; Hendry, 2007; Lynch, 2005; Mehmetoglu & Altinay, 2006).

Grounded theory utilizes an inductive process designed to produce theory through the use of the constant comparison method, an iterative process in which concepts and categories ground in data are constantly compared providing the grounds for theory emergence (Gilgun, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Unlike quantitative studies, grounded
theory methodology is non-linear with participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis occurring simultaneously (McGhee, et al., 2007; Vliet, 2008) while not seeking to prove or disprove preconceived hypotheses (Mills, et al, 2006). This, according to Stern (1980) contributes to the difficulty in describing the methodological steps of grounded theory studies. It is widely argued in the literature that grounded theory is not purely inductive but is rather interplay between the inductive and deductive. Becker (1993) viewed grounded theory as an inductive-deductive process based on the premise that the induction occurs early in the process but through theoretical sampling, deduction occurs. “The inductive process involves the emerging theory from the data, whereas the deductive process involves the purposeful selection of samples to check out the emerging theory” (p.256).

Grounded theory is suitable for studies aimed at developing new theory or extending existing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2004) stated that grounded theory is good to use when studying “…individual processes, inter-personal relations, and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes” (p.497) and for understanding peoples perceptions of the way in which they view and interact with the world (Backman & Kingas, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Suddaby (2006) indicated that grounded theory is less applicable for research seeking objective reality claims and more appropriate for interpretivist research in which claims of reality are based on individual interpretation (p.634). Mills, et al. (2007) argue the views by Suddaby are contingent upon which approach is used in approaching grounded theory research.
In their original study on awareness of dying, Glaser and Strauss (1965) produced substantive theory with later studies by Glaser and Strauss producing formal theory. Substantive theory is more contextual and referent to the setting and/or group the study is conducted on. It is formulated to help explain localized phenomena while formal theory broadens the range of the substantive theory application (Cutcliffe, 2000). The majority of grounded theories are substantive (Hallberg, 2006). Formal theory is more generalizable with broader reaching tenets outside the context of the substantive (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Both types contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding with the primary difference being the scope of the theory.

3.2 Approaches

During the 1980’s and 1990’s the use of grounded theory became an increasingly utilized methodology triggering wide discourse of what was, and still is, considered an emerging methodology. During the time, Glaser and Strauss became divided in their approaches to grounded theory instigated by the publication of work by Strauss and Corbin (1990) but which Corbin (1998) also indicated was a result of their twenty years of separation with each following their own research agendas. Furthermore, Locke (1996) indicated that a review of both authors works indicates the split may be more personal than methodological indicating friendship, loyalty, and intellectual ownership are intertwined in the arguments. The approach by Strauss and Corbin was viewed as taking the analytical phase of grounded theory into a new realm, a realm of which many, including Glaser, disagreed with (Kendall, 1999). Since then, the approach by Glaser has become known as the Glaserian perspective while the Straussian approach has identified
with Strauss (Stern, 1994). Mills, et al. (2006a) refers to the two approaches as ‘traditional’ grounded theory, that which is aligned with Glaser, and ‘evolved’ grounded theory, that aligned with Strauss.

The primary differences are in the role of the researcher, the use of the literature, the format for interviewing, and coding. The role of the researcher was identified by Locke (1996) as a key attribute between Glaser and Strauss and was based on the paradigms from which they conducted their work. Glaser was viewed as adhering to the original tenets of grounded theory which has roots in positivism while Strauss was more of a constructivist. Strauss was viewed as deviating from the original study by advocating for the role of researcher to be more intertwined in the process leading to what Glaser felt was a contaminated form of grounded theory.

The role of the researcher for Glaser and Strauss was originally viewed as removed from the researched (Lynch, 2005). As the work of Strauss progressed it became more aligned with constructivism than positivism. This argument has been extended as the work of Charmaz (2000) has arguably approached the role between the researcher and the researched as co-creators of knowledge and while constructivist also, it is a degree that is more extreme than that of Strauss and Corbin (1998). Charmaz (2000) is based explicitly on constructivist grounded theory while that of Strauss is implicit. Stratton (1997) and Norton (1999) viewed the epistemological stance associated with grounded theory to be interpretivist and constructivist failing to make acknowledge division between the approaches. Interpretivism focuses on understanding the human experience through the participants views.
The second area of divergence was the use of the literature. Strauss and Corbin (1978) and Charmaz (2000) view the literature as providing theoretical sensitivity to the phenomena under investigation and point out that it is the way that knowledge of the literature is used that creates potential conflicts. Glaser strongly advocates approaching research tabula rasa (i.e., a blank slate) while Strauss approaches the literature as needed and encourages the use of it prior to starting a study (Kelle, 2005). Stratton (1997) indicated it is not possible to approach any research without a cognitive framework while Bruce (2007) questioned whether grounded theory can be emergent while also planful with her biggest criticism lodged at the assumption that grounded theory is approached without a theoretical framework based on the literature thus siding with the views of Strauss and Corbin as well as Charmaz.

The third area of discord was in coding. The approach recommended by Glaser is arguably more emergent than that of Strauss and Corbin (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004). However, there are similarities between the two when it comes to the initial open coding yet as the process evolves, Strauss advocates for a more structured method of coding while Glaser views the structuring advocated by Strauss as forcing the data rather than letting it evolve on its own (Glaser, 1998; Kelle, 2005). Glaser (1992) indicated that the structure placed on the coding by Strauss and Corbin is counterproductive to grounded theory as it ultimately leads the researcher away from discovery which is at the core of grounded theory.

The fourth area of differential was the use of pre-formulated questions. Glaser (1992) indicated that the questions should emerge during the study while Strauss and
Corbin (1998) argued that the approach to the study should be more focused but only after the initial categories emerge. In questioning constructivist grounded theory, Glaser (2002) reinforced the tenet that data needs to emerge from the participants and not be co-constructed (Glaser, 2002). He viewed the collection of data through interviews as ideally occurring without a script where the researcher plays a passive, rather than active, role. He saw constructivism as an attempt at legitimizing the forcing of data (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Kelle, 2005).

Corbin (1998), in response to the criticisms lodged against the work of her and Strauss, stated there were many misconceptions of their work including the meaning of hypotheses testing, the reasons behind identifying macro and micro level influences, and what constitutes a problem or phenomena. Corbin stated “Sometimes criticism is not entirely valid because of a lack of comprehension about what is written” (p.122). She indicated that the misunderstandings likely stem from the dissonance between the reader and the researchers indicated through the writing style and the epistemological stance of the person(s) doing the critiquing.

Hypotheses testing, according to Corbin, is not conducted in the traditional sense but occurs throughout the analysis as data it is constantly compared. The process, according to Corbin, is influenced by the epistemological stance of the researcher resulting in the theory being one interpretation of many. This supports the arguments made throughout the qualitative literature that complete objectivity is implausible creating the necessity to introduce reflexivity into qualitative studies (Finlay, 1998; Kvale, 1994). As for the macro and micro conditions, their belief was that the two
influence each other and that the relationship be accounted for and brought into the analysis so that the reader can holistically understand the conditions that influence the phenomena under investigation. The phenomenon is central and represents the problem the participants in a study are wrestling with. The argument surrounding what constitutes a phenomenon is more of a semantic one than a methodological one.

While the majority of grounded theory research utilizes the methods suggested by Glaser or Strauss, a third approach has been brought into the grounded theory repertoire receiving both praise and criticism, both of which, it is argued here, being based upon the epistemological and ontological stance of the reviewer. Charmaz, a noted constructivist and previous student of Glaser and Strauss (Mills et al., 2006a, 2006b) took from both Glaserian and Straussian perspectives in her constructivist grounded theory approach. The constructivist approach is similar to that of Strauss and Corbin with the primary difference identified as the role of the researcher. The researcher and participants in constructivist grounded theory are viewed as concurrently engaging in a collaborative process in which objectivity is neither pursued nor achieved as knowledge is seen as evolutionary and created through the discursive process. Constructivist grounded theory, associated with Charmaz, is considered part of the grounded theory evolutionary track (Hallberg, 2006; McGhee et al., 2007; Thomas & James, 2006).

While the approach by Charmaz (2000) has become part of the grounded theory literature, the approaches of Glaser and Strauss are still the most utilized. The researcher’s paradigm is a primary influence upon which grounded theory approach one chooses. Guba and Lincoln (2004) indicated that outside of the positivistic paradigm,
most others are still evolving and that many characteristics of the differing paradigms overlap resulting in somewhat ambiguous delineations. Positivistic researchers may identify more with the classical grounded theory methodology originally posed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Thereafter, the positivists tend to stick more with Glaser while post-positivists and constructivists align closer to the methodologies and worldviews of Strauss and Corbin or Charmaz.

Grounded theory is considered a relatively new methodology still in its formative stage thus when studies deviate from the initial methodological structure, identified as the initial studies by Glaser and Strauss (1965,1967), it is sometimes deemed muddling instead of progression or evolution. There is a thin line between the advancement of the methodology and the muddling of methodologies but one that all researchers must be aware of and make transparent in their decision making. Muddling of methods was found throughout the grounded theory literature (e.g., Bailey & Jackson, 2003) but in much of the grounded theory canon, this was identified as a result of external barriers creating structure to research where it is necessary for ambiguous, emergent, and dynamic processes to occur. Some of the most cited pressures throughout the literature were from funding agencies, internal review boards, and/or committees (Bruce, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Cutcliffe, 2005; McCallin, 2003, 2003a; McGhee, et al. 2007).

It is widely purported throughout the literature that prior to approval by research funding agencies and academic committees, guidelines and structural expectations or requirements of proposals follow a structure that has traditionally been aligned with quantitatively based research (Bruce, 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The sampling
frame, the script for data collection, the recruitment of participants, the conceptual or theoretical framework, and knowledge of literature all impact upon the feasibility of conducting a grounded theory study as originally formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The aforementioned, when delineated or conducted prior to data collection, tend to counter the qualifications of grounded theory and force the researcher to take steps that may be counterproductive and oppositional to the tenets on which grounded theory stands. Thus, the grounded theorist must make decisions along the way and base those decisions on what has occurred prior to going into the field. Bruce (2007) offered an in-depth analysis of hurdles encountered with an ethics review board and how the hurdles impacted upon the design and completion of her study of teacher efficacy.

These problems are able to be overcome through one of the tenets of grounded theory- that the researcher has room for maneuverability and flexibility in their decision making - thus the aforementioned problems are up to the researcher to creatively overcome them. All of the approaches to grounded theory are presented as a general way of approaching theory construction with the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicating their approaches to grounded theory are based on suggestions, or ‘tools’ (Corbin, 1998) and that it is up to the researcher to make decisions based on those suggestions. Unlike deductive oriented methodologies, grounded theory has minimal structure which makes quantitative oriented researchers uneasy (Robson, 2004).
3.3 Steps in Grounded theory

The suggestions followed in grounded theory are reliant upon which approach the researcher subscribed to. Grounded theory is a process that is both iterative and integrative with many of the steps, including data collection and analysis, overlapping (Duhscher & Morgan, 2004). This makes any explanation of a process, in order, not valid as each study will be different in terms of the different steps. As Hallberg (2006) stated, grounded theory is based on guidelines which differentiate the approaches instead of clear cut rules resulting in flexibility and creativity (Hallberg, 2006). For general purposes the following will describe the literature review, participant recruitment, data gathering, and analysis. This is followed by a section on evaluating grounded theory.

Consistent throughout the grounded theory literature is the dilemma surrounding the placement of the literature review. According to McGhee et al. (2007), the decision of where to place a literature review in grounded theory studies is complex and notes four areas that should be considered when making the decision of where to locate it: ethics committee requirements, the researchers background and knowledge of area under investigation, the experience of the researcher, and the ontological perspective of the researcher. One side of the argument is that one can never enter an area of inquiry without preconceived knowledge of the area under investigation (Gilgun, 2001) which simultaneously is mired in the practicalities of getting approval for studies which Marland and Cash (2005) referred to as “compliance research”, that which is needed to get study approval.
McCallin (2003) considered the purist approach to the literature a barrier for nascent grounded theorists but also identifies external forces such as review boards and committees as factoring into the decision on how and when to conduct the literature review. The primary concern regarding the literature review dilemma is the tainting of the researcher’s views of concepts and theories instead of allowing them to emerge from the data. Awareness of one’s background, knowledge, and understanding is key in helping to ameliorate the potential for subjectivity to encroach upon the study and occurs in the form of reflexivity. Reflexivity is utilized to make awareness transparent not only to the researcher but also to those reading the research and analysis. Every researcher brings to their research theoretical dispositions whether they are tacit or transparent (Sandelowski, 1993) and it is the job of the researcher to make those as transparent as possible. The theoretical perspective of the researcher influences the way in which research is approached thus a transparency of this perspective is necessary (Norton, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and ethical (Hertz, 1996).

The units of analysis in grounded theory are the categories and concepts with the recruitment of participants contributing to understanding the units of analysis. Sandelowski, et al. (1992) viewed sampling in grounded theory as a mix of selective and theoretical sampling progressing from the selective into the theoretical. Selective sampling occurs prior to the study and during the open coding phase while theoretical sampling is pursued following the emergence of the concepts and categories giving structure to the emergent theoretical framework. The coding/analysis alongside the
emerging theory determine the theoretical sampling trajectory through identifying concepts and categories needing further development.

Theoretical sampling is a unique component of grounded theory not shared with other methodologies (Gilgun, 2001). The primary purpose of theoretical sampling is to purposefully locate data, whether through existing data or through the collection of more data from participants, aiming to refine or expand the prior emergent categories. Theoretical sampling is considered by some to be a type of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990; Sandelowski, 1995) and while Coyne (1997) agreed that theoretical sampling is a type of purposeful sampling, he indicated there is confusion between theoretical and purposeful sampling and that “a more accurate term for theoretical sampling could be ‘analysis driven purposeful sampling’ or ‘analysis governed purposeful sampling’” (p.629). The term sampling is misleading as sampling, in the parochial sense, is not occurring but rather the choosing of participants who can contribute the most to the emerging theory or locating pre-existing data is at the core of this process. Theoretical sampling also refers to returning to the data as part of the iterative process in which events or incidents within existing data may contribute to further conceptualization of the theoretical categories.

Theoretical sampling is used as a tool to advance the understanding and conceptualization of the emerging theory through further identifying the properties and dimensions of the emergent categories. There are various approaches to theoretical sampling with the primary difference being the location within the research design that theoretical sampling is utilized. For Glaser (1978), theoretical sampling occurs
throughout the data collection process from start to finish while for Strauss and Corbin (1990) along with Charmaz (2000) advocate for its implementation further into the research process, premised on the assumption that starting theoretical sampling too soon potentially limits the emergence of a core category or new categories. Backman & Kyngas (1999) indicate that many researchers use selective sampling throughout and stated that the defense to this is “…it is impossible to address the whole research phenomena” (p.149).

Sampling occurs until the categories reach a point of saturation. This will occur at varying times for differing categories. Saturation is the point at which data collection no longer covers new information pertaining to the area under investigation. Bruce (2007) highlights the fact that there are few guidelines in the literature determining when saturation is hit resulting in many researchers overcompensating through more data collection aimed at self-assurance the categories were saturated.

3.4 Data Collection

The primary method of data collection in qualitative research is in-depth interviewing (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). In-depth interviews are designed to capture participant views of the world and to accurately extrapolate the way they see and experience the world. Researchers using grounded theory methods are divided over their approaches to capturing data garnered in interviews. Glaser (1978) professed it is better to not tape record interviews viewing it as a potential barrier to the organic flow of interviews. He noted that tape recording of interviews creates unnecessary steps that are arduous and inefficient as they require the process of transcription. His approach to using
a recording device was tied to his methods of analysis which, unlike Strauss and Corbin (1998), did not emphasize microanalysis of the data. Supporters of tape recording interviews contend the process of transcribing contributes to the analytical process and to the honing of listening skills (Easton, et al., 2000). The additional exposure the transcription process provides an opportunity for the researcher to gain initial impressions of the data. As for listening skills, the transcription process requires a massive amount of work and the closer one listens and transcribes the easier and more efficient the process becomes.

Interview scripts utilized in grounded theory are dynamically evolving instruments geared towards discovering theory through semi-structured, yet fluid, narrative interviews (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). Narrative interview scripts provide semi-structured guidance for dynamically engineered dialogue occurring between the researcher and the participant yet are open enough to evoke the natural flow of thoughts, feelings, and ideas that may not be captured with a structured interview. Interviews occurring during the open coding stage are more consistent in regards to questions asked of each participant while the axial and selective coding are aligned with more focused idiosyncratic questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are considered imperative when conducting grounded theory studies as it is not the researcher who guides the interview questions but rather the emergent data and the participants.
3.5 Ground Theory Analysis

Grounded theory is mired in vocabulary that may have different meanings assigned to it in other methods thus there is a need to create a familiarity with the lexicon utilized when discussing ground theory methods and analysis. The following terms and definitions are utilized throughout grounded theory and are a product of the original works by Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967) as well as the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998). The following terms are used throughout the analysis:

Open Coding- This first step in analysis fragments the data and is relatively unfocused, aimed at uncovering concepts and categories within the data.

Concept- Concepts represent the raw data and are labeled in a more abstract, conceptualized form. Concepts are the building blocks of categories.

Categories- Categories emerge from the grouping of concepts representing the concepts at a more abstract level.

Core category- The core category is the highest level representation of all of the data. It represents the overall picture. Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to this both as the core category and central category.

Axial Coding- Occurs after initial categories emerge from the open coding process but is not mutually exclusive from open coding. The two occur simultaneously once the initial categories
emerge. Axial coding is the process of bringing the data back together through conceptualization.

**Selective Coding**

The process of selecting a core category, or categories, that are central to the phenomenon. Selective coding occurs during the production of the story line which incorporates the categories identified during open and axial coding.

**Saturation**

Refers to when data produces little or no additional data regarding concepts or categories.

**Causal Belief**

“Any statement in which an outcomes is indicated as having happened, or being present, because of some identified event or condition” (Stratton, 1997, p.124).

The choice of analysis is predicated upon which grounded theory approach is utilized. Glaser (1978) used two types of coding: open and theoretical. Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) used three types of coding: open, axial, and selective coding. The process of coding in the analytical stage of grounded theory is the area of primary differentiation between the two approaches receiving the must criticism and discussion in the literature. The approach taken by Glaser (1978) is arguably closer to the original tenets of grounded theory while Strauss and Corbin (1998) are viewed as expanding grounded theory analysis but in the interim seemingly steering the process away from its original intention to develop theory (Duchser & Morgan, 2004).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) offer a more structured approach to data analysis than that of Glaser (1992) but also one that is much more complex. The three phase analysis
aligned with Strauss and Corbin is conducted via coding. Open coding is utilized in the initial stages of a study, axial coding builds upon the concepts identified in open coding, and selective coding further develops the categories identified in the axial coding stage. Selective coding amalgamates the categories into a theoretical model that representing the previous categories and concepts and their link to the identified core category. While coding is presented as a sequence of stages through which analysis occurs, the stages are not mutually exclusive or rigidly sequential. Instead, the stages of analysis are dynamic requiring analysis to be a constant evolutionary process characterized by constant comparison between the different levels of data, categories, concepts, and emergent hypotheses. The following stages of coding are presented as a general framework through which the analysis was followed for this dissertation: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

3.6 Coding

Analysis of data in grounded theory occurs through coding and the constant comparison of concepts and categories emerging from it. Coding relies on the researcher as the expert in determining the interplay between coding, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling (Hall & Callery, 2001). Open-coding is the initial analysis phase focused on identifying concepts and categories that are contextually defined and representative of the phenomena under investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Unlike other approaches to research in which concepts are pre-defined by the researcher or the literature, in grounded theory the emergence of concepts is based on the premise that they do not hold intrinsic value, are not universal, and are defined and understood culturally
and contextually. Defining of concepts along with their properties and dimensions is the primary purpose of open coding. As Smith and Biley (1977, p.18) stated, the following questions are being asked at this stage:

1. What is going on here?
2. What are the important issues or areas of interest?
3. What are all the process at work in this world?

Through microanalysis of the data, concepts are identified which when amalgamated theoretically with other concepts results in identification of categories representing the phenomena. Microanalysis is at the core of the open coding stage and while there are varying approaches, Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate for the use of line-by-line analysis, a form of microanalysis, at the start of the data collection which is progressively replaced by less detailed analysis as the research progresses. This is based on the assumption that categories have been identified later in the research and the need for insight into their properties and dimensions, a key to the next phase of coding, becomes focused. The fact that categories are identified does not invalidate the possibility of the emergence of more categories; instead, it offers a manageable framework representing hundreds of concepts identified in the data while producing the basis for theory development.

Axial coding is the process of bringing together the data that was fractured during open coding while adding to the emergent concepts and categories. Analysis through coding is an iterative process requiring a fluid approach characterized by steps that are not mutually exclusive but rather as concurrently analyzed through the constant
comparison method. Coding of concepts and the development of categories may occur in any of the three phases although the likelihood of newly emergent concepts and categories occurring in the selective coding phase is minimal. The properties and dimensions of categories are further identified in axial coding and explored focusing on identifying the variety of conditions in which the phenomena occur, the actions/interactions, and the consequences (Straus and Corbin, 1998). The primary focus is on strengthening the categories while simultaneously identifying connections between the categories. The inclusion of axial coding in the analysis is a key difference between the approach taken by Glaser and that of Strauss and Corbin.

Glaser (1992) argued the inclusion of axial coding shifts the focus away from theory generation and forces data rather than allowing it to emerge. Emergence was defined by Kendall (1999), in relation to grounded theory, as “the process by which codes and categories of the theory fit the data, not the process of fitting the data to predetermined codes and categories” (p.746). He viewed that by seeking data to fit predetermined categories it resulted in the theory no longer grounded in the data, mirroring the arguments by Glaser (1992). His views illuminate the binary approach to grounded theory, as stalwart positions are taken they fail to account for the possibility that both approaches can lead to the same outcomes. If research focuses on axial coding at the expense of the rest of the data and if the researcher is distracted from the research questions being answered, then arguably axial coding is not conducive to the grounded theory process. Alternatively, if axial coding is utilized as part of the analysis, but not the primary focus, then the arguments surrounding its use are minimized.
Glaser uses theoretical sampling from the start of data collection to guide subsequent data collection activities. If axial coding were to be utilized following the initial data collection, this would pose a serious problem to the emergence of theory that is grounded in the data. Kendall (1999) compared two studies she conducted with grounded theory using the Glaserian approach for the one and the Straussian approach for the other. She found that axial coding does hamper the emergence of data but in her comparison she failed to expound upon the fact that she began axial coding after conducting four initial interviews. Alternatively, Charmaz (2000) along with Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate for theoretical sampling to occur later in the data collection phase after concepts and categories have given shape to an initial theoretical framework.

Selective coding is the process of identifying usually one, sometimes two, core categories representative of all of the other categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The theory developing from the core categories is conceptualized, refined, and presented in a storyline incorporating the emergent concepts, categories, and the process through which the theory is developed. The storyline, or theoretical narrative, is constructed around the identified emergent core or core categories providing an account, ground in the data, of the investigated phenomenon. As Charmaz (2000) indicated, it requires “removing the writing from a typical scientific format” (p.527) and into a narrative format in order for the results to be understood.

3.7 Theory

Through the writing of the narrative, the potential for identification of unsaturated categories exists, which if found requires further data analysis of the original data and
sometimes the collection of new data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). For the emergent
theory to be reliable, all categories represented in the theory should be saturated.
Saturation is the point at which data collection ceases to identify new information
pertaining to the area under investigation. Categories can become saturated at varying
times accounting for the evolving data collection approaches reflecting the needs of the
emerging theory. There are no set parameters in terms of how much data is to be
collected, how many participants need to participate, or when data collection should end
(Bruce, 2007). It is a subjective decision of the researcher (Hallberg, 2006). Strauss and
Corbin (1998) state that “usually, microscopic coding of 10 good interviews or
observations can provide the skeleton of a theoretical structure” (p.281) while Starks and
Trinidad (2007) found that grounded theory studies overall are based on data collected
from 10 to 60 participants (p.1375).

The relationship between coding and the emergence of the theory is a murky area
of the literature which may be due to the constant comparative method used which
creates a process that is somewhat ambiguous through its non-linear practice. There are a
lack of practical rules and a lack of literature covering this area of constant comparison
(Boeije, 2002). Realizing this deficiency, Boeije (2002, p.395) produced a five step
process of constant comparison. The five steps are:

1. Comparison with a single interview
2. Comparison between interviews within the same group
3. Comparison of interviews from different groups
4. Comparison of pairs at the level of the couple
5. Comparing couples.
The proxy provided brought to the literature a sample of structure where little existed. All of the steps are not relevant to every constant comparison but it gives good albeit simplistic insight into what occurs during constant comparison. Constant comparison is utilized throughout the grounded theory process to look for negative occurrences which builds up the categories in the process. It is once the categories are saturated that the process being theorized is compared with the data as well as the extant literature (Mehmetoglu & Altinay, 2006).

Theory in grounded theory emerges from the concepts which form categories with categories, and the theory, being the product of constant comparison. It is the relationships between these categories that form the building blocks of theory. Memoing is part of this process through its detailing of thoughts related to the emergent categories and occurs throughout the study with the memos supported by the data entering into the theory. Memo ultimately account for the creativity and exploration on which grounded theory is based.

The culmination of grounded theory studies results in one of two types of theories: substantive or formal. “A grounded theory has a number of characteristics: It must closely fit the substantive area studied, be understandable to and usable by those in the situation studied, and be sufficiently complex to account for a great deal of variation in the domain examined” (Locke, 1996, p.240). Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicated a major problem of grounded theory is conveying the emergent theory to an audience including “how to describe the data of the social world studied so vividly that the reader, like the researchers, can almost literally see and hear its people- but always in relation to
the theory” (p.228). This, according to Denzin (1994) requires keeping scientific out of the narrative as the narrative needs to be understood by and representative of the participants.

Charmaz (2000) and Popay, et al., (1998) indicate the narrative, or storyline, is responsible for bringing the reader into the social world of the participants through a narrative that represents the findings in context. The use of extensive quotes from the data is considered good practice when the audience has minimal knowledge of the area under investigation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). As Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) stated “you must be able to support your interpretation with data (i.e., examples of text), so that other researchers can understand your way of analyzing it. If your interpretation is supported by the data, then it is valid, even if there are other ways to interpret the same data” (p.32). The original work by Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicate that because the theory is derived from the data, the presentation of the theory needs to be accompanied by “characteristic examples of data” (p.5). The most salient benefit of using grounded theory, as well as other qualitative methodologies, is the importance placed on the points of view of the people being studied.

3.8 Evaluation

Rigor in grounded theory is partially based on presenting a conceptually dense detailed description of the process under investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Credibility of qualitative work is evaluated against the researcher’s presentation of the interpretation of the participant’s stories (Fossey, et al., 2002; Hall and Stevens, 1991). Perspectives rising directly from the participants themselves allows for deeper, richer and
more meaningful insight into the questions posed. “Inviting the reader into vicarious experiences of informants is a vehicle for giving voices to the voiceless” (Gilgun, 2001, p.354). Reliability in qualitative studies is enhanced through having the participants read the interview transcripts and the ensuing interpretations thereof (Merriam, 2002). It is also enhanced through the taping of the interviews (Silverman, 1998). The evaluative criteria regarding reliability and validity used for quantitative oriented research are not the same for qualitative oriented research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Long & Johnson, 2000). Baker, et al., (1992) indicated that muddling occurs when grounded theory is presented in terms of independent variables, dependent variables, reliability and validity related to quantitative research, and sampling. Gasson (2004) indicated that evaluation from a positivist standpoint and that of a constructivist standpoint are at two extremes. Guba (2004) expounded upon the differences between positivism and interpretivism as found in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue of Concern</th>
<th>Positivist Worldview</th>
<th>Interpretive Worldview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representativeness of findings</td>
<td>Objectivity: findings are free from researcher bias</td>
<td>Confirmability: conclusions depend on subjects and conditions of the study, rather than the researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducibility of findings</td>
<td>Reliability: the study findings can be replicated, independently of context, time, or researcher</td>
<td>Dependability/Auditability: the study process is consistent and reasonably stable over time and between researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigor of method</td>
<td>Internal validity: a statistically significant relationship is established to demonstrate that certain conditions are associated with other conditions, often by triangulation of findings</td>
<td>Internal consistency: the research findings are credible and consistent, to the people we study and to our readers. For authenticity, our findings should be related to significant elements in the research/context situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizability of findings</td>
<td>External validity: the researcher establishes a domain in which findings are generalizable</td>
<td>Transferability: how far can the findings/conclusions be transferred to other contexts and how do they help to derive useful theories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Positivism & Interpretivism (Source: Guba, 2004, p.90)
Cutcliffe (2000) indicated that grounded theory research has been a problem for some due to their focus being on justifying their studies for quantitative oriented audiences thus attempting to provide evidence of qualitative studies based on quantitative criteria. He further indicated that “attempts to discount the researcher’s values, knowledge, beliefs and experiences could also be regarded as an attempt to gain credibility with scientists who use quantitative or positivistic methods. Such endeavors appear to be upholding the philosophical position that there is one true reality” (p.1479). This is supported in the positivistic stance of Glaser (2001) who viewed reflexivity as unnecessary. Reflexivity, according to Merriam (2002) is associated with the reliability of qualitative research defining is as “critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation” (p.31). Reflexivity is means through which the reliability of qualitative research studies are evaluated by albeit its support is affiliated with the post-positivist paradigm (Hall & Callery, 2001). Cutcliffe (2003) stated that qualitative work not accompanied by reflexivity questions the overall credibility of the research.

Reliability in grounded theory is difficult to evaluate as it deals with evaluation of collection methods and research instruments that are iterative and dynamic. According to Fossey, et al., (2002,), evaluation of all qualitative work should be based on the following criteria:

1. Congruence of research design
2. Responsiveness to social context
3. Appropriateness of sampling
4. Adequacy of sampling
5. Adequacy of data gathering and analysis
6. Transparency of data collection and analysis
7. Authenticity in terms of range of voices and can the participants see themselves in the storyline
8. Coherence - do the findings fit the data
9. Reciprocity between the researcher and the participants
10. Typicality of written report - what claims are being made
11. Permeability of the researchers reflexive stance

Corbin and Strauss (1990) and Silverman (1998) indicate the ability to judge how research analysis was carried out in a grounded theory study is difficult if not impossible. This is one of the primary problems with qualitative studies found in journals. Qualitative studies tend to lack transparency in terms of data collection methods and analysis in published articles (Hall & Coffey, 2001). Wolcott (1994) indicated that including a description and interpretation phase in qualitative research would help with credibility albeit there are the restrictions placed on the researchers by the journal editors one must contend with. Rowan and Huston (1997) present a practical article indicating the expectations and criteria of one journal, Canadian Medical Association Journal, when submitting qualitative articles. The article indicated the unique difficulties associated with qualitative journal entry submissions. As Richardson (2004) stated “unlike quantitative work, which can carry its meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work depends on people’s reading it” (p.474).
Evaluation by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is based on ensuring the results fit, referring to the theory being a product of the data, and that it works, referring to its ability to predict, explain, and be relevant. They further indicated that because of the dynamic social milieu in which the research is carried out, it is not necessary to “discover precise, quantitatively validated, factual knowledge upon which to base the theory” (p.243). Corbin and Strauss (1990, p.17) suggested the following criterion to be used when evaluating grounded theory research:

1. How was the original sample selected? On what grounds?
2. What major categories emerged?
3. What were some of the events, incidents, actions, and so on that indicated some of these major categories?
4. On the basis of what categories did theoretical sampling proceed?
5. What were some of the hypotheses pertaining to relations amongst categories? On what grounds were they formulated and tested?
6. Were instances when hypotheses did not hold up against what was actually seen? How were the discrepancies accounted for?
7. How and why was the core category selected? Was the selection sudden or gradual, difficult or easy?

3.9 Summary

The chapter has provided an overview of grounded theory including the origins, the differing approaches, the methods, and their critiques. Alternative approaches to grounded theory have been presented and through analysis of the epistemological and
ontological stances differentiating the approaches, it was determined that the Strauss and Corbin approach was the most suitable for this dissertation when considering the views of the researcher, the research problem, the audience, the backpacker literature, and the desired outcomes. The following chapter provides an account of the procedures through which grounded theory was used in this dissertation.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODS

The primary purpose of this dissertation was to explore the process through which worldviews were perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States. The methodology chosen was Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) approach to grounded theory. The chapter provides an explanation of the process taken in collecting and analyzing of the data leading to the substantive theory presented in chapter five. The process through which the research progressed is shown in Figure 4.1. It was an iterative process requiring going back and forth between data sets, the use of constant comparison, theoretical sampling, memoing, and open/axial/selective coding.

![Data Analysis Process Diagram](image)

Figure 4.1: Data Analysis Process

The highly dynamic, complex, and iterative nature of grounded theory does not allow for a simple model to show each step through which the research proceeded. Figure 4.1 provides the most basic steps followed in the research. Areas such as determining the
need and the choice of research method were not included in the model as they were complex processes in and of themselves thus they are explained in written form but not included in Figure 4.1.

4.1 Determining Need

An extensive review of the backpacker literature identified several areas needing exploration. The areas recommended for further research by Richards and Wilson (2004) included the following: a) distinctive national identities of backpackers, b) preparation for the backpacking journey, and c) reintegration of the backpacker upon returning home. Pearce (2006) identified the following as needing further research: a) the backpacker experience, b) human mobility and backpacking, c) sustainability and backpacking, d) differences among and between backpackers, e) return to home society, f) backpacker storytelling, and g) distinctive national identities of backpackers. Pearce and Richards both identified research into distinct national identities as an area needing exploration and based on the existing research it was found that backpackers from the United States were underrepresented within the current literature. It was at the same time that there was a realization that the backpacker literature had yet to substantially make in-roads into the connection between global issues and backpacking.

This realization was coupled with the cognizance of global issues relating to the decreasing reputation of the United States and its citizens by those abroad. Anti-Americanism was identified as a global issue that could be combined with the need for studies on backpackers from the United States. It was decided that many of the areas of suggested further research could be combined into one study which the dissertation
accomplishes. Based on the examination of the literature, the original purpose of the study was to identify the process through which worldviews were perceived to be transformed through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States.

4.2 Choice of Research Method

Following the literature and identification of the research problem, it was time to move to the methodological literature to determine the best way of approaching the research. This phase of the research included shifting the focus of the literature review, identifying the best approaches to the problem, and identifying ensuing problems.

The literature review at this point focused on determining the most suitable methodology which included taking into account the problem as well as the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher. The dissertation focused on addressing the meaning, understanding and the process of the influencing of worldviews through the backpacking experience which grounded theory was determined to be well suited. A further consideration was the ontological ground from which both grew differed with phenomenology being constructivist while grounded theory, dependent on the approach, was viewed as less constructivist. I had to take the audience into consideration thus that coupled with the research question led me to grounded theory as it was seemingly less constructivist than phenomenology.

This was also in response to the required defense proposal which required the typical sections: conceptual framework, literature review, and methods. Problems arose as grounded theory does not typically begin with a conceptual framework nor, dependent on the approach, a review of the literature. Furthermore, concrete methods were not
possible to elucidate at the time in terms of sampling or the exact procedures through which everything would occur.

The inability for the dissertation to proceed tabula rasa was based on the necessity to meet requirements and pre-existing knowledge of the backpacker literature. This drew me to the literature of the other grounded theorists and found that Strauss and Corbin (1998) were more lenient with their approach through identifying the necessity to be somewhat familiar with the literature. At the same time, the approach by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was perceived to be more structured than that of Glaser thus the determination to approach the study from a Straussian perspective instead of a Glaserian one was made. The decision was viewed as a balance between choosing an approach that was structured versus unstructured and one that was approached from a constructivist paradigm rather than a positivistic one.

Following the identification of the required conceptual framework, literature review, and methods, the proposal was presented to the IRB (Internal Review Board) for research consent. While waiting for approval, the completion of online ethics training was successfully completed. The expedited review took 53 days from the time the initial documents were delivered to the time of approval. Following the proposal acceptance by the IRB, primary data collection commenced with the required consent documentation.

4.3 Secondary Data Analysis

Simultaneously, secondary data was analyzed. The approach to using secondary data in grounded theory is the same as one approaches primary data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As backpacker research had been on-going by the author of this study since 2004.
there was a plethora of secondary data from which to start to determine what was going on with the journey of the backpackers. The data set chosen was from a study of backpackers which examined reverse culture shock as part of the backpacker journey. The data set chosen was eight transcribed in-depth interviews conducted in late 2007 and early 2008 of backpackers residing in the central United States. Although not officially affiliated with any research program or organization, steps were taken regarding the protection of participants through having a consent form signed that explained the study, that it was voluntary, and that their identities would stay anonymous.

4.4 Open Coding

The eight interviews were open coded for concepts which when amalgamated were conceptualized into categories. Each interview was coded using the constant comparison method. The concepts were identified initially through line-by-line coding and then paragraph-by-paragraph coding. The concepts emerging from the interviews were compared and contrasted with each other grouping like-with-like through identifying similarities and differences between the concepts. Constant comparison is considered a vital part of grounded theory as it is at the core of producing and shaping categories. All data entering into the analysis was compared to the pre-existing concepts and categories. With the centrality of constant comparison to grounded theory, there was little guidance in the literature as to how to approach constant comparison systematically. One exception was Boeije (2002) who gave a transparent account of his use of the constant comparative method highlighting the problem of making the process understandable in terms of identifying the process. The constant comparison method was
used throughout the data analysis eventually contributing to the saturation of the emergent categories.

Open coding aimed to explicate concepts which formed categories that represented what was going on and what was important to the participants. Categories are abstractly labeled representing grouped concepts. An example of opening coding text is presented in Figure 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| You know what it is, especially in America, it’s you’re going against the status quo. You aren’t accumulating stuff. You can’t accumulate stuff because if you accumulate it you’ve got to carry it on your back and it’s the freedom to move around and to go where serendipity takes you or where the wind takes you or where this person that you just met in a coffee shop you just met takes you literally, and figuratively. I’ve met people sitting in a bar. I remember sitting in a bar in Spain, in Barcelona, and I met this guy and I had just gotten there and he was like would you like to come stay with me and my girlfriend? And I was like why not? And I did. And that happened on more than one occasion. It happened again in Venezuela and | American attribute, non-conformist  
Non-conformist, status quo  
Consumerism, practical  
Functional  
Freedom, mobility  
Serendipity  
Freedom as a driver  
Fatalism  
Interaction  
Physical mobility, interaction, figurative  
Reminiscence  
Interaction  
Timing, hospitable  
Trust  
Interaction with strangers, trust, action  
Open, trusting, risk, vulnerability  
Recurring, Different location |

Figure 4.2: Open Coding

Open coding continued throughout the data collection process with each interview contributing more concepts albeit to lesser degrees as the data collection progressed.

With grounded theory there is a reliance on the researcher’s ability to critically analyze and conceptualize when creating categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) with the literature provided few guidelines as to the process of creating categories or coding. The primary concern was in raising the raw data from a purely descriptive level to a more abstract one.

For example, the category of advocacy represented the concepts of encouragement, recruitment, and mentoring. This referred to the practice of backpackers returning
stateside and their attempts at advocating for others to engage in an overseas backpacking experience.

4.5 Memoing

Simultaneously, memos documented potential relationships, ideas, and thoughts regarding the emerging data (see Figure 4.3). The grounded theory literature indicated that memos are necessary for many reasons. The first is the copious amount of data the researcher is working with. Through memoing one is better able to keep track of ideas, relationships, and thoughts. The secondary reason is that the memos provide a basis for the emerging theory. It was through the memos that the concepts and categories took shape. An example of a memo follows:

| There is a propensity for the backpackers interviewed to not be complacent with their lot but instead have a sense of mobility and seeking ‘the other’ with few articulating a destination or place in which they want to settle down. Tacit societal pressures are viewed as strong forces which many of the backpackers battle with in their goal to stay independent of societal norms which when articulated by the backpackers has materialism and consumerism at its core. It may be that the societal pressures are negated through travelling overseas. It is a means by which one is able to exist outside of one’s societal pressures while not being expected to conform to the societal pressures of the destinations visited or those in which they reside in for lengthy periods of time. |

Figure 4.3: Memoing

Memoing is central to theoretical development and occurred throughout the data collection process. As ideas and hypotheses arose they were documented and if incoming data supported them it contributed to the formulation of categories and subsequently the theory. Similarly, if conflicting data emerged influencing the emergent hypotheses it resulted in reconfiguring of the hypotheses to account for the conflicting data. Memos helped identify connections between categories. The majority of memos were incorporated into the storyline. Those that were not were either not supported by the data or were outside the scope of the study.
4.6 Axial Coding

At this point axial coding was occurring alongside open coding and memoing. Axial coding is the process of bringing together the data that was fragmented during open coding. It was during this stage that constant comparison and re-reading of the already collected continued. As the categories emerged, a secondary focus was on locating differing properties and dimensions of each category. It was during axial coding that the categories properties and dimensions increased the richness and reliability of each category. Properties are characteristics of the categories and dimensions identify where along a continuum the property falls. For example, a property or characteristic of risk was support. The dimensions of support were strong or weak, constant or absent, and various dimensions in-between.

The questions asked at this point were taken from Scott (2004) who based them upon the approach by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and were as follows:

1. What is the category?
2. When does the category occur?
3. Where does the category occur?
4. Why does the category occur?
5. How does the category occur?
6. With what consequences does the category occur?

(Scott, 2004, p.204)

To keep track of the copious amounts of data and the extractions from it, data was placed in outline form as well as a table. In the right hand column of the table were the
concepts (see Figure 4.4). During constant comparison they were amalgamated and represented by higher level concepts which were the categories. Categories in the middle column were representative of the concepts. These were then brought to a high level of conceptualization, but not until later in the study, with the left hand column indicating the higher level concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Barriers to backpacking</th>
<th>Corporate grind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not part of expected life trajectory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Expectations are generational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Idea of discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Idea of uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns about existing career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of vacation days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Choices closer to home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not feasible to get up and go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Societal constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Societal expectations of stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attachment to things and acquiring more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Things are tied to pride, identity, and status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4: Example of Concepts and Categories

The outline form proved valuable in that the concepts and categories along with their properties and dimensions could be added to in an organized manner. For instance, the category of freedom included many different types, forms, properties, and dimensions. Freedom can refer to a context, a consequence, or an action. In what context does it exist, in what ways is it a consequence, and how does it come about were all answered through the data. Through using an outline I was better able to understand the categories and all of the data they represented leading to awareness of areas needing further inquiry.

This is where the question of forcing versus emergence, a primary argument in the grounded theory, became transparent. Strauss and Corbin (1998) made an argument for
filling in all of the missing information through direct questioning that is focused on getting answers about specific areas. Glaser (1978) argued that this is no longer considered grounded theory as it is no longer emergent from the participants but being forced. Since I approached the study at this point from a Straussian approach it was a dilemma. I weighed the arguments and agreed with Glaser that it was forced if I was pursuing information purposefully. I decided to allow the information to emerge organically resulting in findings that were truly emergent from the participants.

For this dissertation, several assumptions were made regarding backpackers that were based on the existing backpacker literature. As grounded theory is based on approaching research tabula rasa, the problems with delimiting backpackers prior to data collection became transparent as the analysis commenced. As there was little existing information on backpackers from the United States prior to this dissertation, there should have been less delimitation placed on defining who a backpacker was and what backpacking is. Analysis of the secondary data brought these problems to light.

As open coding of the secondary data progressed it became transparent that the definition and conceptualization of backpackers utilized in the existing backpacker literature did not reflect the experiences of the study participants. There were indications that the social systems the backpackers originated from had an influence on the purpose, type, and characteristics of a backpacker journey. Most backpackers included within their journeys, episodes of work, volunteerism, or schooling. The view of the backpacker journey was expanded from its parochial definitions to include most overseas experiences
occurring during a persons travel career. The need to expand the backpacker journey to a travel career presented opportunities and challenges.

Participants indicated that approaching the study as if backpacking was a single journey did not represent their view of backpacking. To focus on a single experience through delimiting the definition of a backpacker experience was not found to be conducive for the emergent nature of the dissertation. Reviewing the literature, it was revealed that most studies approached backpacking from a single occurrence viewpoint. Initial delimitations were designed to include only participants who had taken a backpacker trip in the previous five years lasting three months or longer and covering multiple countries. A further delimitation was that the trip was to be an uninterrupted independent journey thus excluding those whose journeys were broken up by work, volunteering, or other activities interrupting the perceived nature of the backpacker journey. Since the dissertation was focused on understanding the experiences of backpackers from the United States, pre-existing elements should not have delimited who was and wasn’t considered a backpacker.

The delimitation of the length of the journey was changed due to how the participants perceived long-term backpacking. For one participant, eight months on the road was considered short while for others, three months was considered long. The literature had various delimitations placed on the length of trip in order to be considered a backpacker. Huxley (2004) delimited backpackers to those traveling for three or more months to filter out those who were presumably in holiday mode rather than backpacking mode. The ‘holiday backpackers’, according to Jarvis (2004), were identified as travelers
utilizing the backpacker infrastructure for a much shorter duration relative to the
traditional long-term backpacker. Teas (1974) defined backpackers as those on journeys
falling between a 3-month and one year time frame. Riley (1988) arbitrarily chose 1-year
on the road as a demarcation point between full and part time backpackers. One year,
according to Riley, was justified as a long enough duration where travelers, out of
necessity, operated on a budget, had adequate time to confront identity issues, and were
prone to readjustment problems due to the length and depth of their travels (p.317).
Elsrud (2001) agreed with the delimitations determined by Riley. Elsrud stated “The
definition of a long-term traveler is a person who is away from home for a year or more,
although a few of the backpackers interviewed were, in that sense, ‘short-termers’, with
journeys of 6-8 months” (p.599). Common to all of these definitions were the arbitrary
delimitations placed on the backpackers in essence determining who was and wasn’t
considered a backpacker in their studies. This coupled with the delimitation of the
journey being based on a single episode resulted in explicating these areas from the set of
delimitations.

The delimitation of independence created problems from the beginning as it
wasn’t defined prior to the start of the study but then it was determined that this was good
as it should emerge from the data and not the researcher. Independence meant different
things to different participants with some being entirely disengaged from any form of
structure provided by a for-profit service provider while for others there were episodes
throughout their journeys that they participated in organized tours but these were always
antidotal with none of the participants engaged in a journey that was completely

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structured by a third party. The delimitation of independence was explicated from the
delimitations as it was relative to the participant’s definition of independence.

Participation in multiple country journeys was another delimitation arising from
the literature which should not have been included. One participant spent six months
backpacking through New Zealand but since it wasn’t a multiple country journey he
wouldn’t have initially been included as a backpacker. Although the participant has
backpacked through numerous countries for lengths of up to six months, the delimitation
would have kept him from participation. The question arose as to who determines what a
backpacker is and the delimitating of one goes against the purpose of grounded theory.
The multiple country delimitation was explicated.

Based on reverse culture shock theory it was decided that the participant had to
have been home a year prior to being interviewed. It was realized that since the
backpacker journey was not a single journey but a continuous journey that this
delimitation was not possible. Self-identification of being a backpacker was carried with
the participants throughout their lives and was interwoven into their multiple overseas
experiences. This delimitation was extracted.

This left the study with two primary delimitations: that the participants were
citizens of the United States and that they self-identified as backpackers. It was only
through becoming free of the delimitations based on the pre-existing literature that a true
picture of backpackers from the United States was able to emerge.
4.7 Primary Data

The initial eight interviews provided a structure for further data collection but didn’t produce a clear core category. A core category is a concept that represents all of the categories and is at the core of the emergent theory. As a result, primary data collection was focused on supporting the categories, referred to the act of theoretical sampling, that emerged from the secondary data.

Theoretical sampling did not occur until secondary data analysis was completed. Theoretical sampling began with the first interview conducted in the primary data collection phase and continued until the end. This practice is in line with the approach taken by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Theoretical sampling does not necessarily refer to sampling in terms of participants but rather in terms of sampling for events or incidents. Theoretical sampling means going to where one is going to get the best information to help construct the emergent categories. It means that during analysis one is focused on building the emergent categories. Theoretical sampling began with the commencement of primary data collection.

4.8 Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment in grounded theory is based on identifying participants closest to the phenomena under investigation and who are able and willing to provide rich, in-depth information. The two primary criteria at this point were that they were citizens of the United States and that they self-identified as backpackers. Recruitment of backpackers residing in the United States is unprecedented territory requiring the review
of the backpacker literature for indications on recruitment designs by overseas researchers focused on country specific backpackers.

Israeli backpacker studies were the most prevalent as indicated through the formidable canon of backpacker literature focusing solely on Israeli backpackers. The majority of Israeli backpacker studies were based on data collected while the backpackers were actively engaged with their ‘big trip’. Maoz (2008) along with other Israel-based researchers have recently begun conducting studies of Israeli backpackers after their return to their homeland from their ‘big trip’. Participant recruitment for these studies was approached through a variety of sampling methods presumably influenced by the compact spatial qualities linked to the size of the country and the population within it. Following mandatory military service it is customary for Israelis to travel the world, typically as a backpacker, prior to returning to university or employment. Consequently, universities in Israel provide conducive environs for participant recruitment and sampling. Similarly, due to the highly-concentrated human landscape, snowball sampling in the Israeli context provides another viable avenue for recruitment.

Unlike Israel, the United States is characterized by lower concentrations of human population density, sans large urban cities, and has relatively lower participation rates in overseas travel relative to population size. Low participation rates in overseas travel overall presumably reflect the lower participation in backpacking. As for university populations, current data indicates 1% of university students in the United States participate in a semester or year abroad program and while this does not equate to what percentage of university students travel overseas as backpackers, it does provide insight
into the feasibility of utilizing university settings for sampling or participant recruitment activities.

The number of backpackers from the United States participating in the backpacker community was difficult to ascertain and proved difficult when attempting to locate members upon their return stateside. Lozanski and Beres (2007) indicated few researchers have investigated sampling difficulties with transient populations while offering little in the way of offering insight into overcoming the difficulties. It was determined the internet would be the mode of data collection due to its reach and potential to reach the population that can best contribute to the objectives of the research.

The initial use of the internet attempted to ascertain where in the United States a high concentration of returned backpackers existed. Perusal of websites geared towards backpackers contributed little in identifying where the backpackers concentrated upon their return stateside. Instead, it contributed to further questions including: Do the backpackers continue a semi-nomadic existence upon returning home? Do they return to the places they commenced their journeys from? Do they become attracted to certain areas of the United States upon return? Do the backpackers originate from these areas? Where are these areas? These questions were raised but were not the focus of the dissertation thus remained unanswered. A determination was made to utilize two web portals, Facebook and Craigslist, based on their expansive reach and the opportunities to potentially locate members associated with categories likely to be attractive to backpackers.
Facebook is a social networking portal in which groups form based upon interests and similar associations. Due to regulations, postings for participant requests were relegated to the website marketplace section resulting in two responses. Of the two responses, one resulted in an interview while the other respondent returned stateside too recently to be included. Craigslist, a community noticeboard covering many areas of interest is delineated by cities and covers a wide range of localized boards, groups, and listings.

The postings were listed under three separate areas in Craigslist: community notices, volunteers, and artists. The recruitment ad placed under the artists section was ‘flagged’ in the Seattle Craigslist board meaning the posting did not fit the criterion for placement in that section and was subsequently removed. Since theoretical sampling was an on-going activity from the time of primary data collection until the final write-up, recruitment postings in the Cleveland area Craigslist was approached differently than those outside of the Cleveland area. There were no limitations on dates or times for data collection in the Cleveland, Ohio region thus a sizable portion of the total participants were residents of the area. Recruitment postings in cities located outside a one-hundred mile radius of the Cleveland areas were timed to coincide with the dates of visitation to those cities by the researcher.

Upon selection, participants were sent, via email, a request to choose a date, time, and location convenient for them. Again, participants had to be citizens of the United States and who self-identified as backpackers. Due to data collection coverage spanning several states, the choice of dates for participants outside of a 100-mile radius was
restricted to days in which the researcher was visiting the areas. For those within a 100-mile radius the choice of time/date/location was unrestricted. The states in which interviews were conducted include Ohio, Illinois and Washington. Initial canvassing initiatives covering more states were curtailed due to time and funding restrictions resulting in the participants residing in the three aforementioned states.

After the date/time/location were agreed upon the researcher typically arrived 30 minutes prior to the interview purposefully creating a buffer for locating unfamiliar establishments and to prepare for the interview. The additional time enabled the researcher to choose a location within the chosen establishment where tape recording of the interview would be unencumbered by excessive noise or interruptions. The tape recorder was tested at each location to verify the recording would be of a quality necessary for future transcription. While tape recording is a seemingly banal activity associated with in-depth interviewing, the potential for lost time and data increases if not properly executed. This dissertation followed the research design developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) requiring the recording and transcribing of interviews so that microanalysis of the data could occur.

During the logistical preparations for the interviews an overview of communications (e.g. e-mail correspondence) with the individual participants were reviewed contributing to the personalization of the interview and the building of rapport. Hall and Stevens (1991) contend that content validity is based upon rapport and that grounded theory studies should be conducted in a trustful environment in which the researcher and participant are viewed as equals. The sense of equality may have been
influenced by the recorder being present during the interviews. Hall and Stevens indicated rapport occurs over a sufficient period of time and over several periods of contact but it is argued here that the enunciated sufficient period of time and number of contacts is contextual and is dependent upon the research design as well as the type of pre-existing relationship, tacit or implicit, between the researcher and the participant.

Unlike many grounded theory studies in which rapport was built up over a considerable period of time with the participants, the nature of the single interviews for this dissertation did not allow time for relationships to form outside of the few email correspondences. As noted in chapter two, the backpacker community is known for its ability to formulate intense relationships that are short lived and typically unencumbered by the veracity of culturally defined social protocol typically necessitated before trustful and open dialogue occurs between strangers. The characteristics of intense, short, open, and trusting relationships identified with the backpacker road culture were found to carry over into the interviews conducted for the dissertation. All of the participants were passionate about backpacking as well as about sharing their thoughts and experiences.

Upon arrival of the participant approximately five to ten minutes were spent on small talk followed by an explanation of the study, the procedures of the interview, and the ethics protocol. Small talk was a difficult activity to negotiate as information potentially valuable to the study was likely to be communicated during this period of social discourse thus without the recording device activated there was the potential to lose important data albeit this was many times captured through asking the participants,
while the tape was recording, to repeat what they had said prior to the official start of the interviews.

Upon arrival, participants were explained the purpose, structure, and requirements of the study including that they were participating voluntarily and could at any time withdraw from the study. They were also notified that the interviews were recorded but that at anytime they wanted something off the record or deleted it was their prerogative. Following the explanation of the study, the protocol, and the information as identified on the consent form, they were requested to spend time reading the consent form. They were asked if there were any questions regarding the information on the form or about the study in general. All of the participants voluntarily signed the consent forms. Prior to starting the interview the participants were informed that they may withdraw themselves and/or their data from the study at anytime. None of the participants opted out of the research either during or after the interviews were conducted.

Reflexivity is referred to as the relationships with and interactions between the researcher and the participants (Cutcliffe, 2003) and is influenced by the background of the researcher (Richardson, 2004). Reed and Procter (1995) saw researchers as falling along a continuum identifying their connection to the study and its participants. They proposed three positions: outsider, hybrid, or insider. The outsider is the most neutral as they have relatively little exposure to the people or setting under investigation. The hybrid may have had some exposure, is potentially aware of the setting and people, and yet is still somewhat removed. The insider was identified as someone who was intimately knowledgeable about the setting and participants under investigation.
I approached this dissertation as an insider which presented potential problems of objectivity yet simultaneously offered benefits. The insider position contributed to what Reed and Procter (1998) said was theoretical sensitivity, the ability to understand what was being claimed, and provided credibility amongst those participating in the research. Further, life experiences of traveling and living overseas necessitated the ability to adjust to and immerse into varying cultures and locales requiring the ability to learn about and view the world through the eyes of the local populations visited. Insights and skills honed while traveling overseas reflect those determined by grounded theorists to be essential in conducting this type of research requiring “personal qualities such as having an open and enquiring mind, being a ‘good listener’, general sensitivity and responsiveness to contradictory evidence” (Zydziunaite, 2007).

To enhance rapport and credibility, selective information regarding my background as a backpacker was provided, to varying degrees, with the intention of creating an atmosphere of equality between the researcher and the participant. As the potential for intimidation existed, the extent and type of information exchanged was based upon the knowledge of the participants backpacking experiences garnered through e-mail correspondences. For example, if a participant traveled throughout Europe once, I would make mention that I too backpacked throughout Europe. There was no need to include the rest of my travels in the discussion or that I had backpacked throughout the region numerous times throughout the course of my backpacking career. The intent was not to intimidate or create bias but instead to provide a comfortable setting in which the participants and myself engaged in discourse based on similar experiences and not
differences. A good example of where the perceived difference between the researchers and the participants occurred is found in Lozanski and Beres (2007). They found when conducting their study of independent travelers that their status in the backpacking hierarchy closed doors as they were traveling at a less-budget oriented level then the participants thus when this was indicated their data collection activities were brought to a halt by the participants as they were not viewed as equals. Egalitarianism within the backpacker community has been consistently identified as a characteristic of the community thus by the researchers actions they broke the social contract on which the community is based.

Following self-disclosure, the participant was told there may be questions that may seem obvious from the point-of-view of a backpacker but that the study is focused on hearing their interpretations and thoughts rather than those that are pre-defined or expected of the backpacker community as a whole. My role was to guide the interview only minimally and while there was a semi-structured script, this was tentative as the interviews were more conversational than formal. The research question was answered through in-depth interviews probing into the participant’s impetus for backpacking, the participant’s travel career, their travel experiences as a backpacker, their return home, and the perceived changes occurring in their lifestyles and worldviews perceived to be impacted by their backpacker travels. Through understanding the process of backpacking, one was able to understand the outcomes or the lack thereof.

Data for this dissertation emanated from in-depth interviews conducted with backpackers from the United States previously participating in backpacker journeys
abroad. The semi-scripted interview questions, grand tour questions, were generated and utilized for guiding the interviews. The ‘grand tour’ questions provided are exemplar of the questions asked in the interviews but are not exhaustive as the participant’s answers provoked new questions relative to the topics at hand (Appendix D). While the ‘ground tour’ questions are located in the appendix, the following provides reasoning behind those questions being asked. They were asked to guide the interviews yet were not inclusive nor were asked of all participants.

Under each question are indicators of the importance of each question and/or why it was asked.

1. *Please explain what a backpacker is.*
   - Formulate a definition of backpackers by the backpackers themselves
   - Reconfirmation that their conceptualization of a backpacker fit in with the overall parameters of backpacking meaning it is aligned with overseas budget travel and not focused primarily on backpacker wilderness hiking.

2. *What was the impetus for you to travel overseas in the backpacker style?*
   - Identify the forces creating the need or want to backpack
   - Explore socio-cultural motivations and implications
   - Understand how they became aware of and involved in backpacking
   - Further conceptualize backpacking

3. *Tell me about your backpacking experiences overseas from the first time you backpacked until now.*
- Understand where in the participants travel career backpacking came to fruition
- Understand the backpackers travel career trajectory
- Explore other modes of travel participated in relative to backpacking
- Identify extraneous experiences that may have influenced their backpacking journeys
- To understand what a backpacking journey is in their view

4. What were the highlights of your backpacker experiences abroad?
- Identify events that were viewed as influential
- Explore the reasons why events were influential

5. What areas of your life do you perceive to have been changed by your overseas backpacking experiences?
- Identify participant’s perceptions of how their worldviews were influenced by their overseas experiences
- Identity how their travel influenced their lives back home

6. Do you currently self-identify as a backpacker?
- Understand the role backpacking plays in a persons identity formation
- Explore what it means to be a backpacker
- Explore what being a backpacker means to their everyday lives

7. What did you learn from your overseas backpacker experiences that you think you may not have learned if you hadn’t have traveled, or traveled in this style?
- Understand their perceptions of outcomes associated with their travels
- Identify perceived differences between those who backpack and those who do not
- Explore the relationship between learning and backpacking
- Understand the outcomes in relation to the process

8. *Do you think your lifestyle has changed as a result of your backpacking trip(s)?*
- Determine the extent to which their travel experiences were incorporated into their daily lives
- Determine what areas of their daily lives were influenced by their travels

9. *Do you think backpacking is for everyone or do you think the backpackers are unique?*
- Explore the perceived requirements for backpacking
- Differentiate backpacking from other modes of travel

10. *If you had a friend who was returning stateside after backpacking overseas for a year, what recommendations would you give him/her in terms of what to expect upon their return?*
- Explore the experiences occurring upon returning stateside
- Identify potential problems associated with re-entry
- Determine perceived changes to lifestyles occurring upon returning stateside

All interviews began with, or were asked early in the interviews, ‘what is a backpacker?’ The primary reason for the choice of this question was to provide an additional check to verify the participant views of backpacking was aligned with that of
the backpacker travelers as opposed to backpacking hikers participating in wilderness experiences. The two areas overlap yet there are distinctions between the two. They both require the participation in mobility, voluntary separation from home, and are, to varying degrees, self-sustaining. The majority carry the items they require to sustain themselves in a single backpack that, according to some participants, is designed for minimal constraints of movement. A secondary purpose of the question was to find out from the backpackers how they define themselves. Recent literature indicated there was a lack of self-definition by the backpackers as they have traditionally been defined by the researchers.

4.9 Data Collection Problems

During the primary data collection phase, two problems surfaced: the bottlenecking of interviews and the recording of interviews. The bottlenecking of interviews refers to the time allocated between interviews in which under ideal circumstances would take into account the time needed for the transcription and analysis of each interview. As aforementioned in this dissertation, the transcription and analysis sequence for each interview took, on average, two to three days. The problem arose when interviews were scheduled back to back. Ideal circumstances would have allowed for the management in scheduling of interviews by taking into account the time necessary for transcription and analysis between interviews. The primary barriers to successfully accomplishing this were the time-restricted visits to areas of the country as well as the time-restrictions for participants.
The difficulties in locating qualified participants contributed to the need to collect data in locales where time spent in the locale was restricted due to financial considerations. For example, data collection activities in Seattle needed to commence and be completed within a six day window. Participants, of whom most worked day jobs or were only available during certain hours, needed to be accommodated resulting in back-to-back interviews with no time to transcribe or analyze between interviews. This dilemma was realized the first day thus to overcome this, copious notes were taken during each interview so that newly identified concepts and categories could be further expounded upon in subsequent interviews. Grounded theory is based on a set of guidelines rather than concrete steps one must follow. This allows for researcher discretion and creativity, both of which were needed to overcome this barrier.

The second problem area was that of recording interviews. Previous experiences with in-depth interviewing by the researcher contributed to proactive steps being taken, as outlined earlier in the chapter, to ensure each interview was recorded in a way that allowed for efficient and reliable transcription. The steps taken were insufficient resulting in either full or partial loss of interview data impacting upon six separate interviews. The problems included the use of a cassette recorder with the electrical cord instead of batteries, the pressing of play instead of record, the taping over of an interview due to mislabeling of the cassette, and the complete breakdown of the recording device.

The first issue refers to a problem initially identified in the secondary collection phase in 2007. A lengthy interview was recorded and while the recorder was tested prior to the interview, including a playback to test for the noise level, when it came time to
transcribe the interview, the tape was filled with static resulting in the interview being inaudible. At the time it was not identified as to what the problem was thus a second tape recorder was purchased. During the primary data collection phase, the same issue occurred with the new recorder but this time the problem was identified. When using the power cord to record interviews, this created severe static whereas the use of batteries only resulted in transcribable interviews. Thus the testing of the recorder and tape before interviews must be done with the same power source one will use throughout the interview. This resulted in the rest of the interviews being recorded with battery power only.

The second issue occurred on a day that three interviews were conducted. The recording of two of the three interviews resulted in either blank or partially blank recordings. The initial thought was that they could have been erased during airport transits, requiring the tapes to go through x-ray machines multiple times. This thought was cancelled out when it was found that one of the recordings was partially recorded with the recorded part starting at a point in the interview when a break in the interview was taken. It is only surmised that the problem resulted from pressing play instead of record.

The third problem occurred on the final day of recording interviews in Seattle. Prior to the interview the recorder was tested per the earlier outlined protocol; the recorder would not play nor record. Batteries were changed, the electrical adaptor was tested but the recorder would not work. At this point the participant had arrived and she tried to get the recorder to work to no avail. It was determined that hand-written notes
would be taken throughout the interview and that areas of question would be sent to her via e-mail.

The problem with the broken recorder was compounded by the bottlenecking of an interview immediately following the one in which the recorder was identified as broken. It was determined that for the subsequent interview I would take notes on my computer as she talked. At a typing speed of over 80WPM, I was able to capture much of what was said albeit the interview was very difficult to conduct resulting in an interview flow that was less than ideal. It was explained to the participant prior to the interview that the circumstances warranted a different type of documentation other than recording as it was outlined in the consent form that the interview would be tape recorded. The final problem was with the management of tapes. Most interviews were conducted using only one cassette tape although occasionally there were interviews requiring two cassette tapes. In the case of one interview, a second tape was required and so an unmarked tape was quickly brought out and used to record. It was found that the second tape was not marked in terms of the name of the person interviewed resulting in the recording over of half of another interview. As a result, a total of 22 interviews were used in this study. Eight secondary interviews were used and 14 primary interviews were used. Ten interviews were conducted but not utilized in the data analysis due to aforementioned problems.

4.10 Transcription Protocol

Transcribing of each interview was part of the analytical process providing additional exposure to the data and its accompanying categories and concepts that is
absent when transcribing is not conducted by the researcher. All but two interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher. The two interviews were those that were conducted where the researcher took notes instead of recording the interviews. The duration of the transcription process depended upon the length of the interview, the point in the research process it was conducted, the clarity of the recording, and the speed at which the interviews were conducted. The average transcription process took two to three days from the commencement of recording transcription until the time the completed transcript was forwarded, via e-mail, to participants for verification.

The initial step in the transcription process was to listen to the tape in its entirety. This enabled the researcher to gain initial macro-level ideas of what was going on and also enabled identification of potential problems, such as blank recordings, which occurred even with the aforementioned proactive processes in place. Following the initial run through, the interview was transcribed and typed into Microsoft Word. The transcription process required a stop and go process in which all words were typed verbatim. The initial transfer of interviews from tape to word file was conducted with the acknowledgement that some words, sentences, or items in the transcript would not be accounted for but would be identified in the second round of transcription.

Participants were assigned a pseudonym utilized throughout the transcription process and complying with confidentiality requirements. To protect anonymity, care was taken to verify that no actual names of the participants were used throughout the transcripts. An asterisk was placed next to names that were changed from the original statements. Statements by both the researcher and the participant were included in the
transcripts and while statements of both parties were documented verbatim, there were points in the interview where statements were inaudible at which point the acronym of LIT (lost in translation) was placed into the transcript.

Following the initial transcription, the recorded interviews were listened to again for further verification. This round was conducted to identify potential transcription errors including spelling mistakes or missing data previously undetected. This was accomplished through the use of the spell-check tool associated with Microsoft Word, providing an additional layer of transcription inspection. It should be noted that the spell-check tool offered changes but that the researcher was prudent in making changes as the majority of grammar errors were written verbatim. Changes were made to spelling and punctuation.

Upon the completion of each interview transcription a copy was sent to the interviewed participant requesting them to read over the transcripts, make corrections if necessary, and clarify any information they may have felt was not transparent, was lacking in context, or was misrepresented. This additional step empowered the participants to determine if the transcripts accurately represented their views, which contributes to the reliability of the dissertation. Several participants responded with additional information which was placed at the end of the interview transcripts for inclusion in the data analysis. As Glaser stated, all is data in grounded theory thus the inclusion of the emails contributed to the on-going data collection activities and the building of the theory.
Transcripts were then formatted for analysis. The formatting was purposefully printed as two-columned and single-spaced allowing for notes to be written on both sides of the data columns as well as between columns. Depending on where in the time line of data collection the interviews were conducted determined the degree of analysis. Earlier in the data collection process, interview transcripts were analyzed line-by-line while later interviews were analyzed with earlier identified categories and concepts in mind resulting in less micro-level analysis of subsequent interviews. This process created an additional layer of evaluation in which words that were misspelled and undetected through spell-check were identified and areas of questionable understanding were located.

For this dissertation, the initial 139 categories were decreased to nine categories through identifying their relationships and creating higher level conceptual categories. Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to this practice as reductionism, the act of reducing categories into smaller categories represented by higher level concepts. As open, axial, and theoretical coding continued, two areas began to emerge from the identified categories in terms of providing an overall explanation of what was going on. These 139 emergent categories (Appendix F) were subsumed through constant comparison and reduction leading to higher theoretically abstract categories

1. Freedom
2. Awareness
3. The Self
4. The Other
5. Society
6. Risk
7. Interaction
8. Exposure
9. Worldviews

4.11 Selective Coding

Selective coding occurs once a core category has been identified. Following seven primary interviews, both freedom and awareness persisted as overarching categories explaining what was going on. Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that the emergence of two categories is not unheard of yet not ideal. The question arose of whether a higher level concept could account for both freedom and awareness. No concept was identified so a re-reading of all of the transcripts was instigated. Upon re-reading the transcripts it was determined that freedom subsumed awareness thus freedom emerged as the core category around which all other categories were somehow linked. According to Strauss (1987) some of the features required of a core variable are that it repeats frequently in the data, that it bridges different data, and that it accounts for much of the variation. The core variable of freedom met all three criteria.

Selective coding didn’t commence until the identification of the core category. The identification of the core variable did not change the structure of the remaining interviews but did influence the analysis. Once freedom was identified as the core category the remaining interviews were conducted with cognizance that freedom was at the core of the phenomenon resulting in isolating those events, experiences, or any other information that could contribute to the refinement of the category.
Selective coding is when the relationships between categories are solidified, refined, and connected to the core category. Selective coding was not finished when the primary data collection activities were but instead was carried out through the writing of the narrative. As areas arose during the writing of the narrative that needed clarification or expansion, I returned to the primary and secondary data, the transcripts, to locate data that could help explain the deficiencies or clarify an area that was not clear.

The theory arising from the data had at its core freedom. It is recognized amongst grounded theorists that even with the same data set, the emergent theory of different researchers would likely differ but with both being right (Vliet, 2008). The following chapter provides an explanation of the emergent theory that is accompanied by a narrative that contextually brings to life the theory. It follows the recommendations of Charmaz (2000) regarding the presenting of it as a narrative and further uses an oft cited dissertation by Hall (1992) for a proxy.

4.12 Evaluation

As chapter 3 indicated, reliability and validity are not able to evaluated utilizing the same measures as those used with quantitative studies. Instead, reliability and validity relies on such things as member checking. The most important indicator is that the story line and emergent theory is understood by and represents the experiences of the participants. For this dissertation member checking occurred in relation to both the validation of the interview transcripts and the validation of the emergent theory.

Reliability was further enhanced by the recording of the interviews. This is a practice that Glaser does not advocate as he views it as taking away from the primary task
of theory building. Lastly, reliability is evaluated based on appropriate sampling. For this dissertation the sampling was diverse through the participants differing experiences thus giving them an internal frame of reference through which to compare their experiences.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

This chapter presents the story line, or narrative, through which the nine categories emerged through constant comparison, and reductionism showing the process through which the worldviews of the backpackers were influenced through their travel experiences. As Richardson (2004) stated “unlike quantitative work, which can carry its meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work depends on people’s reading it” (p.474). The process cannot be separated into individual categories. Instead, it is presented in the same way the participants would have experienced it. The validity of a grounded theory rests on the participants identifying with the narrative and the emergent theory. The following is their story.

5.1 Participants

Demographically the participants varied in age, occupation, gender, income level, and educational level. Ages of the participants ranged from the youngest, Andrew, who was twenty years old to Stewart and Mike who were both in their mid-forties. Of the twenty-two participants, nine were male and thirteen female. The occupations ranged from manual labor to software engineer. The majority of participants had four-year degrees with two indicating they had no degree past the high school level.

5.2 Travel Careers

Most participants had extensive experiences overseas including participation in study abroad programs, volunteerism, military service, and living/working abroad (Appendix E). All participants were from the United States and self-identified as
backpackers. Derek stated that “backpacker traveling is who you are – you are not just doing it for a brief stint and coming back”. Jackie, speaking on the relationship between backpacking and her self-identity:

I think it’s just a part of who you are. It’s a part of your identity and it never goes away. Even now, I just bought a house two years ago and I really regret having bought it because I feel so tied down now. I feel like freedom, again, yeah, I can sell it and I will when the market gets better, and now I am married decided where our next move is going to be. Yeah, there is just this sense of loss of freedom that is the backpacker’s soul. (Jackie)

Participants indicated their self-identity was a part of their backpacking identity that was coupled with their national identity assigned to them by default of their residency. Backpacking was perceived by the participants to be an opportunity for understanding that part of one’s identity occurring through opportunities for interaction that created awareness of what made them different and similar from those abroad. Through interaction with other cultures, occurring contextually in the native culture, backpacking provided participants insight into how they were viewed as Americans and how they viewed themselves in regards to being American. As Sue stated, being American came out in most interactions but it was through backpacking overseas that this became transparent to her. “I grew up a child of the nineties, in the U.S., in Alaska so you know I just realized, ‘holy shit’ people see that as a part of me but I can’t really get rid of that”. Referring to the film The Matrix, Matt indicated that the overseas backpacking journey was similar to the message in the movie that one cannot understand from within but instead it takes leaving one’s typical environs to identify differences and in the process gaining awareness of what being an American means to others as well as to the self. As Matt stated, regarding backpacking:
It gives you a different outlook on the interconnectivity of the world and just I don’t know, in this country especially, we have this idea that we are the greatest or whatever and everyone else is substandard and that is perpetuated by the government. So a lot of people think that and it’s not hard not to perpetuate because a lot of people don’t really have interaction with someone from another culture, religion, or whatever in their daily life. (Matt)

5.3 Society and Life Events

For participants, the biggest barrier to freedom was perceived to be society. Participants indicated the barriers instilled by society were ironic due to the historical encouragement and building of the American dream accomplished through mobility. As Sue stated, the mobility of the forefathers of the United States resulted in discovery that was supported by the socially sanctioned pioneering spirit, a mentality viewed as central to the American psyche. This pioneering spirit influenced the establishment and advancement of the United States.

While nowadays virginal physical landscape discovery within the United States is relatively rare, there is the global landscape that is pursued and explored by the backpackers offering them a sense of discovery, adventure, and stimulation which for most were indicated as missing from their everyday lives. Jennifer summed up the backpacker experience in relation to the aforementioned variables:

Its constant, its constant change. You know you are nowhere for any more than a week, and you still don’t get the full grasp of something in a week. You know when you are backpacking its constant change, its constant change. That’s why people can do it for such a long time. You are constantly meeting new people, you’re constantly doing new things, you are constantly seeing new things. Backpacking was pursued because of a need for freedom. Freedom from boredom, freedom from responsibilities, freedom from society, and freedom from life events were all mentioned as contributing to the impetus for journeying. The freedom to
pursue travel for many participants was based upon what one participant referred to as a window of freedom. Windows of freedom were identified by participants as those periods within a person’s life trajectory when opportunities arose and the person had the freedom to make choices that may not have been available to them under routine circumstances. Some created these windows while others occurred naturally. Transition times occurred in association with divorce, graduation, career change, and the death of a loved one were all identified as having influenced participant’s awareness of a window of opportunity that was free from prior restrictions. Mike gave an example of one window of opportunity he encountered.

My mom passed away, so I spent this whole year, I turned 40, my mom passed away, a relationship just ended, I was in this major depression, you know, not feeling good about myself. Not feeling like I was where I needed to be as a 40 year old person...you know I am single, not married yet, no kids but I knew I just needed to travel. I just get so much value out of that.

Societal benchmarks and their coinciding expectations were perceived by the participants to leave little room for extensive journeys abroad thus the participation in backpacking by default was viewed as an act against the status quo. Societal benchmarks, or life stages, were viewed as being set by society in terms of what is and isn’t acceptable at corresponding points in a person’s life including education, marriage, owning a home, having kids, and retirement. It was through their time abroad that participants procured a point-of-reference system in which the expectations, norms, priorities, and values associated with U.S. society were able to be juxtaposed against those of other cultures and societies.
External pressures from society to conform to the norms of the status quo were cognizantly appraised and dealt with in differing ways by the participants. Participants identified operating at different life stages that did not match the social contract set by society as measured through meeting the expected life-stage benchmarks. This dissonance between expectations and actions was a constant battle for some to sustain upon returning stateside as pressures from societal institutions, including the family, created awareness of where one should be and where one was at in relation to reaching the pre-determined societal benchmarks.

Operating outside the status quo for some was difficult to sustain. Kelly and her husband were nearing thirty. They didn’t own a house, didn’t have kids, and had relatively minimal savings. Relative to their friends they were outliers. As Kelly stated “we are on the outside, that’s a difficult place to sustain”. Seeing friends acquire the socially sanctioned possessions through subjugating themselves to the societal pressures of conformity was questioned by several of the participants. As Jake stated, “During that whole time at work I saw these friends of mine buying cars and houses, getting married, having kids and I was like, you know, I am going to save money so I can cut ties at some point and I did. I cut the job off, bought a one-way ticket to Europe and traveled around for quite some time”. Freedom came through prioritizing, sacrificing, and committing to the backpacker experience.

Participants indicated the barriers to freedom associated with backpacking were barriers perceived to be created by society and internalized by the self. Perceived societal barriers included the encouragement of material acquisition, the pursuit of a job above all
else, and the general ordering of priorities that according to the participants are structured to support a society built around business and the creation of wealth. The way a person comprehends and internalizes priorities was also viewed as being based on awareness of alternatives and opportunities inside and outside the status quo. The backpacking journey was identified as a mechanism for creating awareness and opportunities yet it required freedom from the internalized restrictions compounded through the years by societal institutions creating and operating from a certain worldview. Freedom, according to Mike, was restricted in various ways of which some were easier to overcome than others. He saw freedom as correlated with a person’s priorities which were a reflection of choices made.

Choices create consequences and the participants in this study indicated that choices leading to the potential restriction of freedoms were evaded or overcome so that they could participate in the backpacking experience. For Mike, the choices he made throughout his life contributed to his current lifestyle which allowed him to freely pursue backpacking bereft of many of the restrictions imposed upon others making different life decisions.

Single, not having kids, was different than my peers and even realizing that…I always wanted to be married and always wanted to have kids but then I would tell myself, you know what, you wouldn’t be going to New Zealand, you wouldn’t be going to Japan, you wouldn’t be going to Thailand, if you had a wife and kids. You know I still want that but I am not regretting that, I’m not complaining because I have had some great experiences as a single guy. (Mike)

The majority of participants did not consider themselves wealthy in monetary terms albeit they did view themselves rich in experience. As Emma stated “people live their whole life in America getting their million dollar 401k and they’ve never gone
anywhere except to their parents house and back. I guess I just live a more rich life, and maybe not a wealthy rich life but a life full of experiences. (Emma). Wealth in the United States was viewed by participants as tied to status, indicated through the acquisition and presentation of material goods. Materialism was viewed as being tied to priorities. For participants, materialism was viewed as a barrier to freedom and backpacking.

I think the biggest thing I learned, this is one of life’s biggest lessons and I think this may be why Americans don’t travel I think for most people it’s about money. I have this theory that everybody thinks its about money, where we are so dedicated to making lots of money in this country and working our butts off to have lots of things and to have that mortgage payments and those car payments and those furniture and that second house. Our status in this country is based off of what you have, not who you are. (Mike)

Business makes the world spin. So I thought that was the route I wanted to go down. I think the societal pressure is the financial aspects of it. Once you get into it you can make lots of money. People automatically gravitate towards that and that’s look at as respectable amongst the greater overall aspect of society but like once I got into that I was like there is so much more. There was so much emptiness. (Jake)

Participants indicated concessions were made throughout their travel careers resulting in the freedoms necessary to engage in backpacker journeys. Many of them had to sell their belongings in order to partake in their overseas experiences. For Jake, he sold his car to finance his trip around the world. For Mike, he held a garage sale selling as many of his possessions that he could to finance his six month odyssey down under. For others, a conscious choice was made in terms of priorities which required saving money instead of spending it on goods. For Greg, he spent two years saving up for his trip through Central and South America, for Kim and John, they scrimped for six months to afford their three month sojourn through Europe.
Participants indicated their journeys coincided with an event or events, organic or induced, occurring in their lives producing the motivation to take a journey of this nature. Death, divorce, graduation, or career changes all provided what the participants saw as windows of opportunities. For some, the backpacking experience was a response to society in general where they found themselves un-stimulated and unwilling to follow the perceived life trajectory of the status quo. Thus, while the backpackers were preparing for their journeys they were cognizant of others who were acquiring the perceived symbols of respectability and status as perpetuated throughout society with their choice to backpack rejecting the social contract of the status quo. Jackie spoke of the life events leading up to what she saw was freedom through backpacking:

Turned thirty shortly after that, which was a milestone. Went skydiving to celebrate my thirtieth birthday. Bought a motorcycle a couple months later. To celebrate my newfound freedom. You know, the whole thing, this whole story is about freedom. Theme! Freedom. Bought a motorcycle, a month later I crashed it, ended up in a wheelchair, recovered, spent a year recovering, it was not my fault because I got hit by someone. So, I was free for like three months and then I was in a wheelchair so I lost my freedom again. It was then about a year after the accident that, the accident happened in early January, and my settlement came through December 30 or something like that of that year. So with the settlement I decided to get rid of all of myself and go backpacking. Freedom again. (Jackie)

Freedom to participants was conceptualized as being more than just freedom from the expectations of society but also freedom from the socially created worldviews instilled in them throughout their lifetimes.

5.4 Worldviews

Participants conceptualized worldview as an outlook shaped by societal institutions and life events steeped in socio-cultural and temporal context influencing a person’s degree of engagement with and knowledge of the world. Societies were viewed
as creating the worldviews of its members through educational, political, and social institutions with the worldviews reinforced through the media, family, and the same institutions responsible for worldview creation.

Variables influencing a person’s worldview were identified as including the historical time period, socio-cultural events of that period, location of residence, education, media, and life events. Dimensionally worldviews were perceived to be narrow or broad defining the scope of a person’s or society’s worldview. In order to understand the institutions, their influence on worldviews, and their ability to contain them, participants indicated there was a necessity to step outside of one’s society and view the world and their country from another standpoint and backpacking was identified as one way of doing it. As Sue stated, “I think it’s a combination of privilege and oppression and kind of the backpack you are given based on the world you are born into that you don’t choose”. Stewart defined worldview as:

It would encompass understanding or at least realizing that people from different countries will have different perspectives of how they view you, how they view their country, and how they view America. So, I mean, when I dealt with people from France, or people from Thailand, wherever, I mean they are just going to have their own viewpoints of how things should be done and this kind of relates to our previous discussion about how business is done in that particular country, how people work, how open they are to be with other people. Americans, I think, are by reputation I think certainly more closed minded than most because we are kind of removed physically from the rest of the world. You go to Europe and it’s just amazing, it amazes me that you can travel to another country, even easier than here. You just jump on a train and then twenty minutes later you are in Germany over to Poland, France, or wherever; but there would still be a big cultural difference between the two places. As a result, I think Europeans have a little bit more world centric because they are concerned about other countries as neighbors. We are not so much. That would be my definition of a worldview.
The backpacking experience for all of the participants was identified as a life-changing event, or series of events, resulting in the influence of worldviews of the United States, the world, and one’s place within it. Worldviews were perceived to be influenced by the backpacking experience through giving participants the freedom to be exposed to, and become aware of, other worldviews. It was through the freedom to interact with other backpackers and locals in the destinations visited that their worldviews were perceived to be influenced through learning how others viewed them, how they viewed their own country and how they viewed other countries.

5.5 Backpacker Experience

Overseas backpacking was perceived to be a relatively obscure form of travel for Americans. All of the participants went through a phase starting with awareness of backpacking, participation in it, and the return from it. Participants indicated their awareness of the backpacking community prior to traveling was either minimal or non-existent. For those with minimal awareness, it typically came through knowing someone who participated in backpacking or through being exposed to it while traveling in another capacity. Jennifer spoke of her awareness of backpacking, “I had been to Mexico, I had been to Spain, and Ecuador, and I had never done anything like backpacking and after Costa Rica I would have done everything entirely different had I known just how to do it”. As the majority of participants previously traveled as tourists they were able to provide a point of comparison between the art of being a tourist and the art of being a backpacker.

I don’t even know if you can really define what a backpacker is. There’s no like certain definition. I think you have to define the definition between a tourist and a
backpacker. I think a backpacker sort of bridges that gap a little bit, where the
tourist is going just to take a quick break away from home whereas the
backpacker has brought the traveling experience into their life. Whereas a
backpacker traveling is who you are, you are not just doing it for a brief stint and
coming back. (Jake)

While there is a certain level of angst associated with the backpackers discomfort
with or disregard for tourists, as Brad stated, “a lot of backpackers started off as tourists”. Alternatively Lisa stated “Tourists are on vacation. Tourists are on a very scheduled regiment of this is my time away from life and backpackers, this is life, they are already living it”. The transition from a tourist to a backpacker has not been investigated in the backpacker literature and is an area identified for future research. For the participants in this study, who were all from the United States, there were indications that the shift from being a tourist to a backpacker was not an easy one. Growing up, Jake traveled annually to Europe and Oceania with his family and found that “it’s a big transformation to become a backpacker versus a tourist”. He stated that the backpacker journey was much more than a vacation or trip but rather an experience that was outside the bounds of rationally conceptualized travel.

The perceived differences between backpackers and tourists were numerous with the primary areas identified as the locus of control, the degree of structure, the level of risk taken, and trip characteristics. Each of these constructs fell along a continuum ranging from high to low. For the backpackers interviewed, their journeys were characterized as experiences with low structure, low locus of control, and high risk involvement. As tourists, the participants indicated that those journeys were generally structured with a high locus of control with few risks involved. Trip characteristics
included the length of trip, travel party, destinations visited, mode of mobility, accommodation type, and budget. All of the characteristics were deemed by the participants to have an influence upon the type and degree of opportunities for interaction.

The way something is experienced is as important as what is experienced. Exposure to experiences providing opportunities for cultural immersion are not solely the domain of the backpackers yet the backpacker journeys were identified with immersive experiences as they were perceived to be linked to the ability to be flexible with their plans, to become vulnerable to opportunities, and to spend extended periods of time in an area with local people. Speaking on his South African backpacking experience, he said “that’s one thing about backpacking that you truly get is listening to what people have to say in their own environment, in their own house, especially older people”.

There is a perception amongst participants that tourists generally are not exposed to or engaged with the ‘real’ culture or experience. Instead, through their experiences as tourists, participants indicated they were presented with a filtered or sanitized version geared towards the tourist’s expectations. The backpacker experience on the other hand was viewed as occurring in raw environs in which the experience was not geared towards the visitor and provided insight and experience through interacting with people in their everyday lives, the lives of the locals as well as the backpackers. Interviews contained the adjective real to describe various travel corollaries- real backpackers, real travel, real deal, and real people. Andrew, who had an extensive travel career spoke about ‘the real deal’ or what he saw as localities that are off the beaten path in their natural state.
There was a prevailing perception amongst the participants that there were different ways to travel and that backpacking was the “right” way. The right way referred to distancing oneself from the activities and supporting infrastructure associated with institutionalized mass tourism. For tourists, it was perceived that difficulties were minimized through the tour operator, those structuring the visitation, or the infrastructure catering to tourists. As Matt stated regarding mass tourists, “They think that everything should be the same as it is at home but just a little bit different but not enough to make them uncomfortable.” According to Terry, real travel was not staying in 4-star hotels but instead staying in hostels, home stays, and participating in couchsurfing. The differences allow for opportunities for socialization and interaction outside of the host-guest commodity based relationship.

Backpacking as a form of travel was primarily identified through the independent, self-directed nature of the experience. For all of the participants, backpacking was an experience based on freedom to make decisions with little prior planning and freedom. Mike spoke of his first sojourn abroad as a tourist:

Well, my first overseas experience wasn’t really a backpacker’s experience. It was one of those meet some friends in England who were living there temporarily and that was my first time out of the country really and the reason I mention that was because I didn’t have to do anything, I wasn’t on my own per se, I went there by myself, but they guided me through England, Scotland and Paris, I didn’t have to figure out how to get around or do anything. Structure of a trip can be viewed along a continuum from high to low and it can be argued that lack of structure is a characteristic of backpacker journeys. The key is who does the structuring and is the traveler dependent on others for structure or dependent on themselves to create the structure. As Mike indicated he had every day planned out for
Control was in the hands of his friends whereas on subsequent travels in the backpacker style the control was within Mike or within the control of the locals.

Control was also influenced by the budget of the participants. They viewed that their shorter backpacking journeys were different than longer ones due to the influence of their higher budgets. Backpackers are commonly referred to as budget travelers due to their propensity to limit their expenditures while on the road. The participants budgeting had more to do with the length of time on the road than the amount of their budget. The majority of participants identified time and money as two commodities influencing their decisions and experiences. Brenda stated “in order to travel you need time and money and you very rarely have both at the same time”. They perceived most travelers as having more of one than the other with both influencing the type of travel experiences. Participants were viewed as having more time than money which they perceived shaped not only their experiences but the determination on which destinations were visited.

Participants saw their minimalism on the road as contributing to what they perceived to be more authentic experiences as their budgets generally hindered what they perceived to be extravagant forays, perceived to distance the visitor from the visited. Their budgets controlled what they did and how they did it resulting in participants perceivably experiencing the locale the way the locals did. This was accomplished through the use of public transport, shopping at markets and local stores, and participating in the daily rituals of life. Participants juxtaposed this style of travel against the tourist travel style which was viewed as existing in an environmental bubble buffering the tourists from the true life of the areas by staying in accommodations and
taking modes of transport that were comfortable relative to their lifestyles back home. The conceptualization of a budget traveler was perceived to be dependent upon the context and the meaning scheme of the receiver. Through the stories of the participants, the awareness of wealth was primarily transparent in developing countries where participants became aware of the way they were viewed by the locals. Jackie noted in South America that she was viewed as having money based on the fact that she was backpacking. She further elucidated that she would probably view backpackers in the same way. Similarly, one participant found while in Dubai they were surrounded by suited people in marble-floored malls thus their conceptualization of the budget traveler was perceived to be different than that of a local in a country such as Bolivia.

5.6 Freedom

Backpacking has historically been associated with the state of being free symbolized by mobility, a core characteristic of the backpacker journey. The mobility connected with backpacking was viewed as freeing people from a range of circumstances including expectations, responsibilities, boredom, perceptions, and from society in general. Participants indicated backpacking offered them the environs in which to freely explore themselves, as well as the other, through experiences occurring in a liminal zone in which the social contracts of their home society were not regulated. Freedom, or the lack thereof, was identified by the empowerment of participants to become aware of the influences of power and society on their knowledge, the construction of the self, and the construction of society. Backpacking, according to the participants, encouraged separation from the barriers to freedom by following a personal life itinerary bereft of
limitations and restrictions associated with their home society. The backpacker journey to participants was characterized by the freedom to choose where to go, when, with whom, and for how long. It was further characterized by the freedom to make choices from options, previously unaware of or availed to them, allowing for spontaneous experiences and encounters.

5.7 Risk

Freedom required taking risks that participants identified as occurring at differing times and for differing reasons. The risks identified fell into three categories. The first was psychological risk. These were perceived risks associated with a minimized locus of control and where the experience leads a person into unknown territory. This type of risk was simultaneously viewed as being correlated with fear which for most participants was perceived to be a barrier for mass participation in backpacking. Through entering into unknown areas and experiences, it required trust, openness, and vulnerability. Through taking these risks participants saw their opportunities for interaction and learning increased. The second identified category, societal risks, were identified as those risks associated with making choices incongruent with mainstream expectations and shifting priorities to those that do not represent the societal norm. Several backpackers identified the potential problems their nomadic journeys would have or had on their careers and while for some this was an area of concern, several participants found new career directions through backpacking thus leading to what they perceived to be more self-fulfilling work. Another risk under this category concerned monetary security with some participants indicating their savings did not reflect a security blanket expected of people
at their age. The third category was the practical risks. Many of the participants embraced their fear of the unknown by exploring areas not associated with mainstream tourism. The risks included medical, safety, and legal. Some worked illegally while abroad or ventured into areas that were considered off limits to foreigners. Others identified experiences of being in situations that made them vulnerable resulting in being victims of crime ranging from being held up at knife point to being pick-pocketed. These were real risks and as their travel careers progressed, participants indicated a propensity to learn from them and make adjustments in their travel habits to account for them.

For many participants, risk was tempered through a cognizance of support where if it was needed, there were people who would help them out and/or the backpacker had the financial means by which to get out of certain situations. Financially, all participants indicated their backpacking journeys were self-financed and independent of support from others. However, if situations were to arise in which the backpackers budgetary acumen didn’t survive for the duration of the trip, there were people willing and able to help. The same cognizance of support applied for situations that were non-monetarily related.

Support was also conveyed in terms of the backpackers having a place to return to post travels thus the risk of leaving was viewed as being tempered by the sense of security of having a place to return to. The majority of participants returned to their parent’s homes for varying periods of time. This to them helped minimize the psychological risks that most faced with returning stateside. For some, staying with friends or family was temporary while for others the parents became a way station between further trips.
As travel careers progressed the perceptions of what constituted risk while on the road were refined. Risks were viewed as calculated or uncalculated and influenced by a person’s self-efficacy and tolerance for a low locus of control. Calculations were based on prior experiences thus the ability to take risks and the comfort in taking them increased as participants became more comfortable with their sense of intuition which formed the basis of identified risks. Freedom of mobility was associated with the type and degree of risks taken. For Sue, spending extensive time over numerous visits to South America instilled an understanding in her of what was perceived to be a risk, what wasn’t, and what the potential consequences were of taking certain risks. Her experiences prior to her solo backpacking trip in South America were primarily structured as they were connected to formalized travel programs including, but not exclusive of, study abroad programs. She perceived that when she was finally on her own as a backpacker that the risks she took would never have occurred in previous visits. This was attributed to her refined intuition, or what was referred to by one participant as the acquisition of street smarts. As Mike stated in his synopsis of an incident in New Zealand, intuition becomes refined creating a guide that balanced risks with the opportunity for experiences. Street smarts were viewed as being created and refined through experience and through the amalgamation of experiences, intuition and street smarts increased the participant’s confidence in evaluating situations. As a result, situations that may have been evaded previously became situations that were embraced. Overcoming previous risks and challenges provided a freedom perceived to increase their opportunities for interaction.
Taking and embracing risk was identified as one of the keys to creating opportunities for interaction with the unknown. Risk taking and facing the unknown was perceived to leave one vulnerable to unforeseen outcomes but also to inclusion in unique opportunities. It was taking a risk that was perceived to lead to the most enriching experiences throughout the backpacker journey. As Jackie stated, “It’s like backpackers have no fear in a way. Fear of the unknown. There is no fear of the unknown. It’s like embracing the unknown and that’s what sets us apart. It’s embracing the unknown”.

5.8 Interactive Opportunities

The backpacker journey was viewed as a series of encounters and experiences where the outcomes tended to be unknown, identified as a primary point of difference between the experiences of backpackers and traditional tourists. Tourists were perceived to have expectations and base their travels on meeting them. Participants perceived backpacking has having no expectations thus constantly experiencing the unknown or unexpected. Intertwined with risk while on the road was the locus of control. Participants were cognizant of their minimized locus of control while overseas that for many required a shift to a near fatalistic mindset. Minimized locus of control required dependence and dependence required trust that was the basis for interactions with strangers. This understanding of locus of control was tied to patience, a concept continuously identified in the data as a requirement and outcome of the backpacking journey.

The locus of control was perceived to be dependent on the travel party with solo backpacking perceived to be associated with a lower locus of control than when backpacking with others. Speaking on solo backpacking Andrea stated “It’s hard. It’s not
You don’t think about it but making friends is work”. For many participants, the solo backpackers were perceived to represent the “true” or “real” backpackers. To solo backpack, participants indicated it took courage, stamina, risk, and trust to travel in this manner as it created a sense of vulnerability through raw exposure to the elements perceived to not be available in the same degree to backpackers traveling with others. Vulnerability and exposure were viewed as potentially beneficial aspects of solo travel as they resulted in opportunities for interaction perceived to be absent when traveling with others. The two participants, Kim and John, who hadn’t experienced solo backpacking perceived the opportunities for interactions were curtailed due to traveling together instead as opposed to if they were traveling separately. One of the primary benefits to traveling together was a sense of security but as stated, it also was perceived to curtail opportunities due to their being less vulnerable.

Most participants indicated their journeys were defined by both solo and group travel as visitors joined them for short segments of their journey. Visitation occurred while they were mobile so instead of visiting a fixed place, visitors joined them at points along their travel routes. Home at the time for the backpackers was the road and visitors were temporary visitors. Visitation was perceived to inflict unique dynamics on the journey including: its structure, comfort, views of loneliness, tempo of the trip, and freedom. Kim and John found visits from relatives were a welcome respite from the backpacker lifestyle as they were treated to accommodation and meals typically associated with higher-end touring. For Andrew and Matt, the arrival of siblings created
an excitement in terms of being able to share the experience with them. For Sue, she had multiple groups of visitors throughout her South American sojourns.

All participants who had visitors while on the road indicated the tempo of the trip was changed due to the time restrictions of the visitors. Visitation influenced the pace of the trip, the itinerary, and the freedom of the backpacker. As flexibility was viewed as a requirement for backpacking, visitation created differing dynamics in the trip but they were well received with the knowledge they were only occurring as a small portion of their overall journeys.

For participants, their trips were generally for long periods of time thus shifting focus throughout was practiced within a single journey. One destination within the journey may have been viewed as a place for historical inquiry while another may have been used solely as a way station to rest and relax before hitting the road again. The shift varied from backpacker to backpacker and was based upon their past experiences, their interests, their budgets, and the experiences and interactions occurring within their journeys.

For many, their backpacking journeys included what Jake called a series of actions focused on giving rather than taking. This was personified through volunteer work which many of the participants engaged in during their overseas experiences. These experiences included working with street children in Brazil, working with a deaf theater group in Nepal, teaching English in India, volunteering at an animal sanctuary in Phuket, Thailand, painting murals in Costa Rica, and working on organic farms in New Zealand to name a few. For some, volunteerism enabled them to feel like they were giving back
to the communities visited while for others, volunteerism provided structure to a journey that may not have had structure prior to the volunteer work. Volunteerism was viewed as a means to an immersive experience and was perceived to be an advanced form of backpacking.

The backpacker journey was viewed as having certain requirements. Freedom, risk, trust, openness, discomfort, commitment, dependency, time, and patience were all identified as being required during every participant’s journey. These same requirements are the characteristics they attributed to the social contract shared by the backpacker community of which they all identified with. The influence of the backpacker community on the backpacker in regards to worldviews was perceived as influential, if not more so, than encounters with the local populace. The data suggested that while communication and interaction with locals was a source of influence on worldviews, it was primarily through interaction within the backpacker community that the majority of worldview awareness and influence occurred.

Jake was asked how he would explain the backpacking community to someone who had never been part of it. After attempting to formulate an answer he said “I don’t think I can. I can’t think of a way. When you’ve been through the similar experience you can share it only with people who have been through it also. You can’t really explain it well enough to share it with somebody who hasn’t been through it”. Participants indicated that the backpacker community was composed of strangers temporarily coming together and bonding through a love of travel, a need for survival, and a curiosity of the unknown. Trust and openness were at the core of the multicultural interaction which
included discourse with others from around the world leading to awareness and insight into others worldviews as well as their own. Furthermore, members shared unorthodox travel experiences requiring, at times, dependency on others, through the sharing of resources and in the process creating a cycle of reciprocity aimed at communal survival. As Lenora stated “The backpacker community? Well when you are traveling it’s kind of an instant click. You know, you are friends with the person that you just met ten seconds ago and you are instant friends”. According to Lisa:

But I think that when you’re doing that, you have a bond with other people that are, you understand each other, it’s the same kind of breed of people, really, it’s that mentality of like we are all doing something that there is no book written on. We do not know what the next step is and its scary sometimes so its really nice to be able to talk to somebody who is like ‘I’ve been here for two years’ or ‘I’ve been here for three weeks’, you know, we can all relate to each other because we are all in the same boat even though we are all going in different directions.

Participants agreed in their perceptions that a certain mentality existed amongst the backpackers although for most it was difficult to identify in terms of tangible attributes. Most identified the community as characterized by persons bound together through a level of trust, reciprocity, mutual dependence, survival, and egalitarianism. The egalitarian nature of the backpacker community was perceived to strip people of their everyday identities, their societal roles, and the expectations associated with their home community. As Brad indicated, you are anonymous and bereft of an identity outside of being a backpacker when on the road. As Mike stated, people within the community took you for face value creating an atmosphere that encouraged trying on new roles or the changing existing ones. This occurred in an environment that was perceived to strip the community members of their gender, education, past accomplishments, career, and
generally puts focus on the present and not the past. The job one had outside of the backpacker experience or the wealth they accrued or the education level were viewed as not having a place within the backpacker community nor were given status based on them. As Mike stated:

All these travel experiences enhanced who I am and when you are in Thailand or in New Zealand they don’t care what you do back home. They don’t care how many degrees you have or how big your house is. They have a curiosity about it but it doesn’t give you status, it doesn’t give you quality, it doesn’t give you purpose as much as who you are, why did you come here, why are you interested, how did you know people in New Zealand exist, why do you care about our house being washed away by the water. Who you are has been most important and that human connection of who you are than some rich arrogant American or what you do back home.

Pumpkin found exposure to and entry into the backpacker community was the first time she found a community in which she really fit in. “I have never felt so comfortable in a community of people as I did there and that’s why I am addicted because I finally fit in somewhere”. In society, Pumpkin was externally labeled as unique but as she immersed herself into the backpacker community she found that in that circle, she was the norm, not the exception. This was disconcerting for her at first as she had always been known as someone who thought and acted outside the box and in the backpacker community she was considered inside the box. She found that people didn’t decide for her that she was searching for herself, as people back home determined, and that she was free to be herself and was accepted for that. Pumpkin was not alone in her thoughts with Andrew stating “I don’t know. I never fit in here; I never knew what I wanted to do with my life here. Never, didn’t know who I was and in high school I had no ambitions and then when I went to Thailand I fit in, just other people like me who
never wanted to have a career or go to college; it’s never-never land. I would rather be Peter-Pan than Joe worker”.

The backpacking community was perceived to be engaged in travels that were uncomfortable but rewarding. Participants equated discomfort with backpacking. Discomfort varied in degrees and forms and was perceived to be relative to a person’s travel career and the experiences within it. For those whose travel was primarily in developing countries, their identification of discomfort was different from those who backpacked primarily through developed countries. Emma offered an example of where the degree of discomfort faced was too much for her to overcome. Although an international business graduate, she had not been exposed to poverty aligned with developing nations. She traveled with friends from Europe to Northern Africa where she found conditions and reality too uncomfortable for her, thus she retreated with the others, back to mainland Europe.

Mary spoke of her travels throughout India and her need to overcome her unease associated with developing world conditions. The majority of her travels to that point were in developed countries and she was visiting India while residing in Japan which is noted for its cleanliness and high standards. She indicated that after one day in India she was ready to fly back because it was too different for her but then she acclimated and found that through overcoming her fears and unease she had “the most amazing experience”. Discomfort while on the road came in differing forms and was responded to in differing ways. For Emma and Mary, their exposure to developing world country conditions created unease in both but while Emma retreated, Mary decided to stay and
overcome the discomfort. As Andrea stated, “I think being uncomfortable for awhile, through being uncomfortable, you find out what is comfortable”.

Directly tied to discomfort was patience. Patience was identified as a requirement for backpacking as the experience took participants into unknown territories and experiences in which different cultural context required learning to operate on other people’s terms. The low locus of control experienced in these experiences was well represented in the stories when various uses and meanings of time were encountered. Time in America was perceived to be conceptualized differently than in other countries. According to Andrew, time is more valued than people are in U.S. society. All of the participants in the dissertation indicated newfound insight into the use and value of time through their overseas experiences.

Tied to time, patience, and discomfort was the locus of control. Dependent on what was experienced and how it was experienced was perceived to be where the locus of control was placed. With the participants, it was through their willingness to accept the shift of locus of control that resulted in experiences that were perceived to be the most eye opening and challenging. It was through consistently taking risks and interacting with the unknown that patience was acquired and utilized to the point where some indicated operating in near fatalistic mode meaning their mode of operandi lacked future orientation. Mike stated “There is something very un-American to living moment to moment”. When participants attempted to control their circumstances when the locus of control was external to them it was found by some to lead to frustration because the control was in the hands of others who were operating from different cultural canons. The
acquisition and refinement of patience became a skill that participants indicated was required for, and refined through, any backpacking journey.

5.9 Awareness

The backpacker experience was viewed a series of cross-cultural encounters with not only the host nationals but also fellow backpackers. The backpacker community is composed of travelers from throughout the world and through interaction, participants became aware of similarities and differences. It was also a basis for understanding one’s own judgments and stereotypes and providing awareness that for some, like Mike, resulted in understanding the harm that may arise from stereotyping. In a stay in a hostel he found himself in the midst of a confrontation as one guy in the hostel was picking on another. Mike said:

There was a British, the Asian, and another kid, Irish or something, and they were like yeah, yeah, like get him... they were intimidated by him. But you were always challenged by that. the Germans, the Germans are a certain way, or the British, they are a certain way, or the American are…and you don’t want someone judging you as an American you better not be judging anybody else for what their culture is. So that really opened my mind to like ok, they are German, that tells you something about them but give them the opportunity to find out who they are as a person, you know.

Backpacking experiences took place with people from many different nationalities that for many become a network of friends. It is those friends, scattered throughout the globe, that were visited on future trips. For Stewart, backpackers he met while touring the hillsides of Chiang Mai he ended up staying with while visiting Germany and Holland. For Andrew, his initial travels throughout Southeast Asia resulted in friendships that became part of future travels. In a road trip in the Arctic Circle area of Finland, Matt came to the realization that the trip was a multicultural experience that to
him signified something greater than the trip itself. “At one point I was driving a car through Finland, with a Greek, German, Hungarian, and Belgian and we’re listening to Russian music. It made me feel that the boundaries of nationality aren’t really that great”. Similarly, John spoke of a time he became really aware of the multicultural nature of backpacking. Referring to the guys in the dorm room in which he was staying, “one guy was from like Portugal, one guy was from Brazil, one guy was from China and one guy was from Australia and I was from America and we were all staying together. It was like this is crazy, there are so many different countries just staying in one room”.

Use of created and internalized criteria to judge situations and people were viewed as being based on a meaning making system reflecting the worldviews of a society. Participants indicated that one of the key attributes of experiences and opportunities arising through their travels required the suspension of judgment based on their socio-cultural meaning map. Participants became aware that the criteria they used to judge situations or people stateside were not necessarily relevant overseas and that if used it created the potential for missing out on opportunities, experiences, and created potential for cross-cultural conflict.

Exposure to different societies and people of varying nationalities created an awareness of one’s own. For Matt, after spending time in Scandinavia, he became aware of the differences between the United States and Sweden in terms of social programs and governmental responsibility. “I feel like this society doesn’t really value its constituents”. Various dimensions of society were identified throughout the data as being different from that of the United States, an awareness of it created through backpacking. A few
participants indicated an awareness of societal medical support around the globe either through discourse with others from societies in which universal or similar health care programs covered residents, or through experiencing the medical systems first hand. One participant indicated that if health care were universal in the United States it would free residents from the financial worry associated with maintaining health coverage freeing up monies that could be used elsewhere.

Awareness of socialized medicine was accompanied by an awareness other peoples availability and use of vacation time. Through exposure to and interaction with others while overseas, participants indicated becoming aware of how leisure time is spent and valued in other cultures as well as the way travel was perceived to be encouraged and socially accepted as part of society. Awareness of general leisure, travel and work habits were identified as becoming transparent through the backpacking experience. Speaking about her interactions with Israeli backpackers occurring while she traveled, Jennifer said:

Their whole life concept is awesome because the do the whole high school thing and then they go in the army, two years if you’re a chick, or three years if you’re a dude. Out of the army you go backpack. You go backpack for maybe up to a year. You go travel, see the world, and then you go to school. It’s not like school, school, school, job, job, job. They are totally chilled. So by far the most common backpacker were the Israelis. And like still I think they are the coolest people I have met because they are one of a kind.

Mike expressed similar sentiments in relation to his experiences while backpacking through New Zealand. He indicated a newfound awareness of the priority and acceptance a country places on the travel experience. He stated:

I think other countries that travel where these kids are taking a year off to do their OE, there overseas experience you know it encourages a culture it encourages
their families encouraged to do it. I even found that in New Zealand like I was curious about that and I would ask people why is this OE so important and they explained to me and hey, we are in New Zealand and we are at the bottom of the earth and they have a real complex about being at the bottom and they we won’t give you a job unless you have done your OE, we don’t want to invest time, energy, and knowledge into hiring you and then a year down the road if you are going to get antsy and anxious because you don’t know what’s out in the world, we want you to go out and see the world and we hope you love New Zealand and we hope you come back. So we don’t want to hire you until you have done your OE because we don’t want you to take off after we have invested in you, so, go do your OE. Hopefully, you are going to come back, go see Canada, go see America but then come home and we will hire you. I remember seeing commercials on TV over there that for a bank putting money away for your kids OE. You know we don’t have that here. (Mike)

Participants perceived that relatively long periods of travel was neither culturally advocated nor encouraged in the United States. The expected lifestyle and socio-cultural underpinnings of American society were perceived to prevent, or create barriers to, independent travel. With vacation time averaging under two weeks in the United States (World Tourism Organization, 2007), the form and type of tourism persons partake in is presumably dictated through time constrained parameters. As Mike remarked “I think it just opened my eyes that the rest of the world travels but I think it’s more culturally acceptable, like everybody does it. Its more like you travel for knowledge not travel for ah…., you know ‘I got to see the great beach’ or ‘I got to go on a cruise’”.

Acceptance of long term travel was perceived to be associated with the business world. Participants perceived there was a lack of awareness in the United States business world of the benefits this type of travel had on the participants. Andrew attributed this area of ignorance to the practice not being socially sanctioned as it was not viewed as contributing to the progression of a consumerist society.
Just it doesn’t help the economy so why would the government tell you to leave the country, and do anything, it just kind of hurts them putting you through all of this free education and high school and then you just take it and go elsewhere, go and spend your money somewhere else, I don’t know. There is no reason, or there is no benefit to those in power if you leave and so they have no reason to tell you that is an option. They tell you, you should go to college, you should get a job, you should be a consumer and that’s what benefits them and that’s what a lot of people think is what you are supposed to do with your life and then I feel like I have just gotten lucky and realized that is not the only option.

Participants indicated their learning occurred in an environment in which various viewpoints created a more holistic view of the world due to the learning not emanating from a single platform or worldview. Not unlike groupthink, traditional education was viewed as creating views of the world that promoted a specific socio-cultural worldview.

Sue indicated that backpackers could be on the road for months but if they don’t have the seeds planted in their minds or they aren’t challenged in terms of their views or understanding of the world, that the seeds won’t result in anything more than a nice trip. Kelly agreed by stating that backpacking is “a good start. It’s certainly the beginning of a longer conversation hopefully. I you look at your life as a long conversation and experience, that’s a good start”. Matt, a degreed engineer and graduate student stated “it is the best education you can possibly get” in reference to backpacking. Frank stated “Clearly, the lessons, you couldn’t list them if you tried. It just colors your perception of the world, how you see people, and I think it makes you a lot more understanding”.

Participants indicated that travel was a form of education for them and that what one learns in a book or a classroom was not able to be fully comprehended unless it is experienced in person. Face value was viewed as important. Andrew stated “My view of
the world is that you shouldn’t believe everything you hear. There’s a lot of stuff that you just need to go and see for yourself if you want to know about it”.

According to Sue the presence in an area does not necessarily equate to the elimination of perceptions. The degree and type of personal intimate contact with locals outside the tourist areas was considered central to breaking down stereotypes and preconceived notions of what an American was perceived to represent. As tourists, participants in this dissertation indicated their interactions with locals was minimal and occurred in the form of commercial transactions perceived to have influenced the type and depth of cross-cultural discourse. It was not the mere presence of people overseas that was perceived to inflict cross-cultural understanding but rather the intimate contact with foreigners, in their country, that was perceived to have influenced worldviews.

Through interaction with other cultures one becomes aware of their own practices and lifestyle as well as that of others. Matt spoke of his experiences in Cambodia with one experience in particular being his stay with a local family. He was invited to a local home where he had dinner and the experience of using a local version of a shower, the dip and pour, a practice ubiquitous to the Southeast Asia region. After having dinner in what Matt described as a “wooden construction”, referring to the house, he found himself engaged in a cultural faux pas:

I had to take a shower, I had to learn how to do the bucket shower, and I was like, I tried to stick the soapy bucket into the drinking water and they freaked out. I was like, ‘oh sorry’ and I thought this is something that many people do every day and I have no clue about it. It was startling to me.

The experience expanded his understanding of the meaning of water and how it was a commodity that was not conceptualized the same way universally. This sort of
experience was perceived to have occurred for several reasons. Matt put himself in a situation in which he was invited back to this person’s home. This required a level of reciprocal trust. The experience also required a somewhat unstructured itinerary allowing him the freedom to partake in experiences as they surfaced. The freedom associated with the unstructured itinerary required time that led to opportunities. The lack of structure, the freedom from time constraints, and the willingness to take risks required a level of trust all contributed to what Matt perceived was an experience influencing his worldviews through experiencing first-hand other peoples lifestyles. This created awareness of his lifestyle stateside. As Lenora stated, understanding comes from “Not just having the knowledge but actually having the experience and seeing other people live this way and knowing that’s the way of life”.

Cultural immersion was associated with cross-cultural interaction. Participants indicated that it was through opening themselves up to opportunities that they were able to partake in a cross-cultural experience where reciprocity between the backpacker and the locals occurred. Jackie gave an account of a time in her backpacking journey throughout Latin America when she felt the need to become temporarily ‘stable’ after backpacking at a fast pace for eight months. She made the decision, while in Columbia, to temporarily stay in Quito, Ecuador due to its lower cost of living. It was there that she met locals, learned a new craft, and recuperated from her travels.

I needed to chill. I needed to have a life, like a stable life for a little while, so that’s when I went to Quito because Ecuador was so much cheaper than Columbia. I loved Columbia but it was a little bit more expensive so I ended up in Quito for, I think it was about three to four months. So I started hanging out with the hippy guys on the street that sell the jewelry, made the jewelry and all that type of stuff. You know, mostly South American. And so I said I want to learn
how to make it, so they taught me how to make jewelry and so I started making my own.

The type and depth of interactive cross-cultural experiences was perceived to be a choice.

As Jake and Kelly stated:

The trip can impact you as much as you want it to or not. I mean you can cut it off, you can be pretty comfortable, you could do nothing but hang out with other traveler, you could eat at McDonalds, you can get your Starbucks coffee in most places, and you can interact with the local communities as much or as little as you want. (Jake)

I think you have to work through all of those things to really get to know a culture, to really make friends, to really learn the language, to really understand the context and the subtleties of the culture that you just can’t see as an outsider. (Kelly)

Cross-cultural understanding took time and for the backpackers who spent longer periods of time in a country exhibited more transparent insight into how the culture operated. For Stewart, he found himself engaged in learning about the Thai culture while backpacking there during a military coup.

In Thailand, for example, since I was there long enough, and read a little bit more about it, and met the people there, I realized that it’s an interesting government. The police have almost as much power as the army and then the way that business is done; there is a lot of bribery involved, chaos, what we consider graft, corruption, it wouldn’t work in America, it couldn’t work in America it can’t work but over there it kind of works, or they manage to get it to work. And so it led me to, I don’t know, it was eye-opening let’s say.

Many expressed appreciation for things that may have been taken for granted prior to their trip. The extent of the appreciation was perceived to be dependent upon the countries or regions visited and the experiences occurring within them with developing countries perceived to have offered a starker contrast to the lifestyles of the United States. There was an expressed awareness of lifestyle differences throughout the world, relative
to the United States, but it was the journeys to developing countries that participants indicated they were faced with the most transparent differentials. There was an increased sense of difference and challenge that went with traveling through developing countries. For those traversing through developing countries, the exposure to poverty created an awareness that participants perceived to only be understood through experiencing it. Terry stated that “we have life pretty good here”. She got frustrated with people who viewed things as being horrible in the states by stating ‘life is not that tough here. Sorry dad couldn’t buy you the new car’. Her experiences took her from Los Angeles where she was brought up in a upper middle class environment to the slums of India and Nepal where she learned to appreciate what she had through awareness of what others didn’t have. Matt held similar views of his experiences in Cambodia. He stated:

People I met were so nice but they had, I don’t know, they don’t have much at all yet they are happier than most people here who have, you know, everything and that is one thing that really annoyed me, and I even say it. When people say ‘oh I have no money I am so poor’, but yet you do have money. I am not talking about people who seriously are poor but people who are in the middle class. It bothers me that, yeah, basically I am kind of poor but not at all compared to the people I met and yet they are far happier than I am.

For many of the participants, they perceived a level of happiness in the people of developing areas to be higher than that of the general populace in the United States. Their understanding of the dissonance was that those living in poverty may not be aware of what they don’t have thus it doesn’t give them a reason to be discontent whereas in the United States participants perceive the populace as being saturated with communication promoting the ideals that more is better. This may account for the future orientation
attributed to the United States identity as opposed to an orientation geared towards daily survival.

Awareness of the other created awareness of the self. Derek recalled walking through Bombay “seeing people bathing in the streets, see poor little kids, and here I am this rich, rich wealthy white person walking through with a camera that is probably worth more than they make all year”. The gaze on locals is done to various degrees. The strength of the gaze was perceived to be dependent on the cultural distance and the level of interpersonal communication between the backpacker and the other. Through personal interaction one is immersive thus the type and form of relationship with the other will determined the strength of the gaze. As Andrew stated “it’s a spectacle. It’s more like a freak show or a circus; you go look at them, take pictures and head out again. I mean even that remote location is now exploited”.

5.10 Self Awareness

Backpacking was viewed as a means through which a person could identify their differences creating a sense of individualism that may not have existed in one’s routine life back home. As Mike indicated, when he travels overseas he is “constantly looking at all the things that makes you different” which in the process contributed to his self and national identity. Through experiencing difference he was better able to reflect upon who he was as a person and a U.S. citizen. As Sue indicated “It also got me out of my comfort zone allowed me to see myself more clearly as a white woman from a particular background with a particular ethnicity. Most white folks in the US are brought up to think of themselves as “normal” with everyone who’s non-white being “other””.

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The backpacking journey offered participants an opportunity to reinvent themselves through stepping outside of their normal environs in which assigned and earned roles created expectations that were perceived difficult to escape. The liminal zone in which the backpackers operate is well documented in the literature which this dissertation corroborated. The backpacking experience was viewed as a time of exploration of identity or the re-creation of an existing one. As Brad stated, the backpacking experience personified the “freedom to meet new people who have no preconceived notions of you. Well I am talking about getting away from people that already know you, or that maybe you don’t like your life here and when you are out on the road, where nobody knows you, you are taken as face value, [LIT] let you say about yourself where you’ve been, freedom”.

I realized that I am a Midwesterner I am from a small town, a farmer boy American. I am not an arrogant American. I am not a wealthy American. So I think it is those kinds of perceptions that I think people get from television and movies, you know shoot’em up Rambo kind of things, you know that’s what they picture as an American because that is what they see through their pop culture. (Mike)

Their identity as an American, the perceptions and creation thereof, was brought into focus through their journeys. Through their overseas journeys backpackers became aware of the ethnocentric views perceived to be created and nurtured in American society. The media was identified as one of the influential purveyors of society’s views of the world. The majority of participants were not aware of the differences in media coverage and the biases involved with them here in the United States prior to their overseas experiences. Media was perceived as being instrumental in portraying what is and isn’t important in society and how the world was to be viewed. Through
interpersonal communications abroad with locals and other backpackers, there was a sense that there was widespread frustration and confusion about America and its people. Exportation of popular culture from the United States was identified as a contributing factor with shows such as *Jerry Springer* being broadcast globally influencing the way people viewed America and Americans. Similarly, generalizations were found to be pervasive in regards to others assuming that, as Pumpkin stated, “our leader is a reflection of the people”.

Participants perceived the media in the United States as responsible for reinforcing ethnocentric views through creating images and ideas of the world through partial and sensationalist news coverage geared towards the local rather than the global. Greg indicated he stayed attuned to many sources of media news including networks he perceived to be top purveyors of ethnocentricity. A Greg stated “I find it educational even to watch Fox News, the by-far worst network, simply to witness what people are being told”. To compensate for the subjective nature of the news, a majority of the participants now seek out alternative news streams with many indicating that the BBC was one of the most respectable and reliable news source they turned to for their news.

For some, the ability to watch the news while abroad offered insight into the ways other countries cover world news. All participants who expressed that they paid attention to the news while overseas indicated they became aware of differences in the way news was reported at home and abroad. They became aware that those countries in which they watched the news also had a viewpoint from which they were reporting. The viewing of news while abroad contributed to awareness of the worldviews of the persons in the
corresponding areas of the world and also created an impetus to seek out alternative news when back in the United States. Andrea stated “It’s also interesting to be in America how to watch the BBC world news and their take on America and it’s pretty wild to see how things are talked about”.

One of the perceived reasons for international ignorance was the secondary sources of information feeding images and information contributing to the creation and reinforcing of stereotypes. Without personal contact with other nationalities there were perceived to be few options by which secondary views could be altered. Participants perceived that backpacker travel created a more balanced picture of Americans through their interaction and discourse. Overcoming of stereotypes and generalizations assigned to the United States was perceived by the participants to occur through interaction and discourse.

Participants indicated their perception of the ethnocentric nature of United States society was reconfirmed while abroad through becoming aware of their own ethnocentrism which became transparent through interactions with others whose worldviews were different. Ethnocentrism was viewed as a mentality or attitude characterized by perceiving one’s way of looking at the world is superior to others and indicated through a lack of interest in the other. Participants identified ethnocentrism as culturally grounded and perpetuated by the educational system, media, and society in general. A metaphor for ethnocentricty was given by Greg when he stated “Basically, I guess, the lack of willingness to swim in someone else’s pool. You know you are comfortable with your own pool because it’s maybe the biggest on the block and even if
someone else has a great swimming pool to try out and test, ‘no I like mine, why would I
swim in yours’”.

An ethnocentric worldview was viewed as emanating from a combination of
isolationism, ignorance, and arrogance contributing to and perpetuating ethnocentric
worldviews. Participants perceived that isolationism was a characteristic of U.S. society
influencing the degree of ethnocentricity perceived to be attributed the United States by
those overseas. The majority of participants identified isolationism as resulting from both
controlled and uncontrolled factors. The controlled factors were those that were inorganic
stemming from the influence of societal institutions. The uncontrolled were associated
with the physical isolation, and ensuing cultural isolation, relative to other countries
around the world. An awareness of the physical and cultural isolation of the United States
from much of the world was perceived to influence the way in which the United States
interacts with the rest of the world.

Life events were viewed as contributing to worldviews and the backpacker
journeys were no exception to this. Another life event was that of September 11, 2001
when terrorists attacked the United States. The events of 9/11 were mentioned by several
participants in the context that they perceived the events to have been inevitable due to
the lack of U.S. integration with the rest of the world, with the actions or non-actions
viewed as symbolizing a lack of respect for the global community. This lack of respect
was perceived to have contributed to the decreasing reputation of the United States and
its citizens. As Joffe (2006), Kohut and States (2007), and the Pew Global Attitudes
Project (2007) indicated, the negative perceptions were not isolated to the country or its politicians but have become attributed to its citizens.

Isolationism was perceived to be at the core of creating ignorance. Identification of ignorance occurred in participants when faced with situations creating reflections of their own ignorance. Overcoming ignorance was premised on becoming aware of it which to all of the participants in this study indicated occurred during their backpacking journeys. Overcoming of ignorance was indicated to occur through experiences requiring freedom from, or the challenging of, their socially constructed worldviews. Discourse and interaction with those harboring differing worldviews was views as central to influencing their own worldviews.

Ignorance was not viewed as mutually exclusive to people from the United States but was perceived to be a universal characteristic identified through exposure to it during their backpacker travels. Participants indicated a pre-existing awareness of what they saw was an ignorance of the American people regarding globalization and the role the United States plays in the larger scheme of things. The perception of U.S. ignorance was reinforced through the backpacker journeys as participants were faced with situations that questioned their own ignorance which for many was viewed as representative of U.S. society. Just as important was the awareness of ignorance of the United States, perceived to be pervasive throughout the international community.

Several types of ignorance were identified including cultural, geographic, and political. While cultural and geographic ignorance were discussed, it was political ignorance that stood out. Political ignorance of the American people was something
Pumpkin found shocking as she was confronted with her own political ignorance. She indicated that neither she nor her social group back in the states was “very knowledgeable about politics”. While overseas she found the passion and intimacy of overseas elections reflected a level of involvement she perceived was absent in the United States.

Participants indicated participating in discourse with others about the United States and its actions around the world. For some this meant defending the United States that necessitated an understanding of what or who one was in defending leading to awareness of personal political ignorance. For most they weren’t aware of their political ignorance prior to being overseas but it was through discourse with others while overseas that they became aware of it. Participants indicated that many of their conversations while backpacking revolved around global and political issues. Discourse instilled awareness in the majority of participants that the view of the United States was based on misinformation, or a lack of holistic understanding. Simultaneously the participants perceived those overseas knew more about the United States than what people in the United States had of other countries.

I mean globalization right is going on, you definitely have to be aware of what is going on in the rest of the world. America is losing their, world leadership, now where we are headed I think you have to be aware of what is going on and you have to be able to appreciate differences and learn other people’s ways of life...
(Kim)

The United States was perceived to be at a critical juncture in history where the country and its citizens were not viewed as positively as in the past and it was through the participants backpacking experiences that they were able to better comprehend what they perceived to be the reasons. The reasons identified by participants, supporting the
literature, were based on generalization of Americans which they perceived to be ignorance, arrogance, and isolationism as being at the core.

Participants perceived that one of the reasons for those perceptions was the lack of personal contact with Americans while concurrently drawing from images created by the media. Foreign cultures were perceived to obtain their view of America through the media or exports such as the cinematic arts creating an image that is neither reliable nor valid yet was for many one of the few means by which images of the United States were formulated.

Through acquiring or refining patience while overseas, this created cognitive dissonance upon returning stateside. Participants indicated that one of the areas they had to work on upon returning stateside was to readjust their meaning of time which for the duration of their journeys was asynchronies to the United States. Through learning patience while on the road, it resulted in the identification of impatience in America, realized by several participants prior to arriving stateside.

Impatience is another thing I noticed here. People have become super impatient. I noticed that was something that hit me in the face the second I got on the airplane in Rome. The airplane left late. I’ve lost luggage in Paris, I’ve missed a flight in Munich and had to stop there for a day and a half. That’s what you do. Shit happens. You put Americans on an airplane and the airplane is twenty minutes late people are freaking out. It’s just because we are so used to things working on a schedule and fast and I feel like, not just in Europe but South America, it’s a total lack of time, things will happen efficiently. Calm the fuck down. Just slow down.  (Andrea)

On the way back with my brother, we were trapped, not trapped, we were delayed on the plane. We had already flown from Bangkok to Tokyo to Chicago and we were on our last flight from Chicago to Cincinnati. So we were on the plane and these people were complaining because they had delayed the plane, there was, I don’t something with the runway and they are calling their friends and they are like ‘I don’t know, this is so horrible, I don’t know if I am ever going to get home.
First of all the pilot was giving regular, in fact two regular updates, in English so everyone knew what was happening, there was food and drink going back and forth, it was climate controlled, there were no bugs, there was a toilet and there was toilet paper. I could not believe it. I had to turn on my Ipod to drown out the insanity. (Matt)

Andrew perceived the root of much impatience to be cultural. Impatience was perceived to be connected to expectations, which for the participants was low or non-existent, dependent on the journey. Cultural differences, such as the connection of time to impatience, presented what were seemingly normal scenarios into somewhat difficult and challenging experiences. It was through understanding the cultural dynamics that were at work in a situation that created understanding and in the process overcoming the challenges faced. “Backpacking makes you learn about how to deal with inconveniences. Where sense of time in some cultures...their sense of time is very different than ours. Where tomorrow doesn’t necessarily mean tomorrow. Manana might mean anytime next week or so”. Increased patience was one of the outcomes of the backpacking experiences of the participants who indicated that patience was not only viewed as the act of waiting but also an all encompassing attitude that things are going to work out.

A newfound awareness of the pace of life in the United States was cited by most of the participants as an outcome of their journeys abroad. Exposure to other cultures and their approach to the pace of life led to questioning why life in the United States moved at such a quick pace and what relationship is has on the subsequent quality of life. The pace of life was consistently juxtaposed between the United States and overseas locales by the participants whether it was Andrea comparing Italy with the United States or John comparing Spain to the United States. Through the backpacking experience, an
awareness of the pace of life became apparent through daily interactions with, and for many the immersion in, the cultures they were visiting.

5.11 Outcomes

The outcomes of the travel careers of participants were perceived to have influenced the ways they viewed themselves, their country, and the world. Outcomes varied from the acquisition of practical skills such as the increased ability to organize, budget, and adapt to various situations to the less tangible outcomes including cultural literacy, the increase in self-efficacy, awareness of the self, awareness of worldviews, understanding influences of worldviews, tolerance, and appreciation for difference. Furthermore, participants indicated an increased cognizance in how their worldviews were shaped and those of U.S. society through identification of the creation and reinforcement of ethnocentricity, ignorance, isolationism, and travels ability to influence them.

Through backpacking, participants identified awareness of other lifestyles which created a platform for understanding their own lifestyles. Changes, intended or actualized, were a result of their exposure to other ways of living and approaches to life. Most of these outcomes were tied to an increase in empathy, interest in others, curiosity, open-mindedness, tolerance, for those societies and people who operate on different terms. As Mike stated “I’m not very cognitive, I talk more about how I feel about things rather than what I think about things. So, yea I think my travels have changed my life or enhanced my feeling aspect about life immensely, I am more compassionate towards people, I am more open-minded towards people who are not like me”.
The art of backpacking was considered an exercise in minimalism. Self-containment to meet the needs of a journey are packed alongside items that are initially perceived as needs but later turning into wants. Participants identified the process of engaging in simplification and downsizing as their journeys progressed. Their awareness of wants versus needs resulted in many of them either discarding or willing away items that they viewed as inconsequential for their journey. The practice of downsizing was carried over into every backpacker’s life that was interviewed. The degree to which downsizing, or simplification, occurred seemingly relative to the lifestyles engaged in prior to their journeys. As relatively planted individual, Stewart owned a large house, cars, and numerous possessions prior to backpacking. Upon his return from a five month sojourn through Asia and Europe he realized there was no need for such a large house, for all his possessions, or to be located in an area that wasn’t community oriented. He further realized his dependency on the automobile and through his travels became aware of the benefits associated with other means of transport. This resulted in his moving to a smaller house, nearer to work, so that he could ride his bike, the selling of many of his possessions, and an awareness that the he was keen to eventually move to an area that promoted and felt like a community, the concept identified during his travels in Europe. This simplification of lifestyle was directly linked by participants to awareness created through their overseas experiences.

Through their journeys, all of the backpackers indicated they became aware of their own consumptive practices through exposure to others consumptive practices, or the lack thereof. Consumption in this context related to expendable goods and durable goods
such as the size of one’s house, the type of transport used, the use of energy sources, and the lifestyles tied to each were reflective of U.S. society, that which participants deemed wasteful and non-sustainable. Exposure or participation in alternative lifestyles instilled in its participants new ways of doing things or new ways of viewing old habits.

While changes based on their awareness created through backpacking were identified, there is little known regarding whether or for how long they were sustained. Alongside awareness of alternative lifestyles overseas was the awareness of areas in which the United States was perceived to be lacking when it came to the aforementioned practices.

It also gave me a context that people don’t all live the same way that I do, and that seems to be working out really great, you know, maybe I need to rethink the way I live life, it’s just all of those things it give you, you have to already be starting to think that way but travel gives you a place to go, ‘oh, I see, now I see, now I understand’. (Sue)

While the intentions for change was present in the majority of participants upon their return stateside, the realities associated with those changes created a dissonance with many indicating the practicalities of the changes were unable to be pursued in their routine environs. This was most transparent in regards to alternative modes of transportation where the use of the automobile in the United States was not viewed as an option but rather a necessity. The freedom to restrict wanton practices was perceived to be curtailed by the realities of society and the lifestyles people have grown accustomed to. Mike made the point when speaking of his intentions to make changes to his lifestyle.

We are energy hogs, plus we have big old houses. It’s just different. And you come home and you just don’t want to partake. You can’t immerse yourself in one culture and experience but then come home and not immerse yourself back into your own culture. As much as you try not to, and you don’t want to, you know, I
feel like I walk my own path and don’t do what everybody else does, as much as I can but to some degree I’ve got to get in my car and drive somewhere, you know I’ve got to have my heat on in the winter time. (Mike)

All participants indicated their journeys created a new or refined awareness of their consumptive lifestyles. It was indicated that materialism, status, and reaching the next rung in the career or class ladder were choices people made in the United States that did not coincide with the priorities of the backpackers. It was transparent that there was a mentality that coexistence of the priorities of the status quo and the priorities of backpackers were not mutually exclusive, but close to it.

You know what it is, especially in America, it’s you’re going against the status quo. You aren’t accumulating stuff. You can’t accumulate stuff because if you accumulate it you’ve got to carry it on your back and it’s the freedom to move around and to go where serendipity takes you or where the wind takes you or where this person that you just met in a coffee shop you just met takes you literally, and figuratively. (Jackie)

Exposure to other lifestyles created awareness in backpackers of the minimalism that exists in relatively wealthy countries as well as third world countries; some lifestyles by choice while others dictated by circumstance. Consumption and acquisition of goods were viewed as being at the core of the lifestyle cycle in the United States. Materialism was consistently identified as a negative and central component of society in the United States where acquisition of material goods were viewed as central to the American lifestyle. Participants indicated it was easy to become focused on material acquisition and rather difficult to keep it at bay. Consumption and possession of material goods were identified as characteristics of culture in the United States both representing indicators of wealth and status within society. While possessions were viewed as symbols of status and one’s achievements they were viewed by the participants of this study as a primary
barrier to backpacking. It was not the possessions per se but rather the strength and importance of the relationship one had with them. An example was given by Kate in which she found herself faced with the dilemma of purchasing a newer car which she felt pressure to do so due to her new job or whether to stay with the car she had. “I drive a 1994 Jeep that my parents basically discarded because I want to keep doing things that interest me, I don’t care about material goods. So maybe that is the root of it, is our materialism and our obsession with reaching the next plateau of class or the next rung in the ladder. That’s at the root of this”.

The elusive Jones, of ‘Keeping up with the Jones’ fame, were viewed by participants as being representative of a level of consumption that could never be achieved or sustained due to the dynamic nature of consumerism. Participants perceived that constant betterment of the self was prioritized in the states and was propelled through communicated messages that you need to be better in some part of your life whether it be your career, your body image, or your possessions. The moving target is purposefully mobile and never fully realized as it is a way to keep the consumption cycle feeding into the economic system. As Terry stated, “discontent is relative and that happiness does not seem to equate to possessions”. Her view has been generated partially by her experiences in India and Nepal where possessions were minimal but happiness was perceived to be high. Her views on needing “stuff” mirrored the same sentiment as the other backpackers. For those who traveled through developing countries, there was a keen awareness of the meaning of possessions and it was perceived that possessions did not necessarily equate
to happiness. This gave rise to an increased appreciation for the simple things in life producing an awareness of wants versus needs.

All backpackers identified that as a result of their backpacking experiences abroad, their priorities shifted in terms of material acquisition and their everyday lifestyles. For some it was a new way of living while for others it resulted in refinement of pre-existing minimalistic lifestyle choices. Some relocated to areas where public transportation was available or biking to work was feasible where others returned stateside with the intention to incorporate backpacking into their overall lifestyles. The driving force behind these changes was an awareness of what was considered important, perceived to be a result of their extended time abroad. “My goal is to save money so that I can go travel”. This statement by Andrew was repeated throughout the data as participants indicated a will to continue their backpacking careers by keeping travel at the forefront of their priorities. Through prioritizing travel, the participants indicated it necessitated staying in or creating a mode of minimalistic living.

Time and money were perceived to be connected to freedom in that they provided opportunities that otherwise may not be possible. The difference between the participating backpackers and those who haven’t backpacked was perceived to be how both time and money were spent and the opportunities connected with each. For backpackers, time was a commodity providing opportunities that money couldn’t buy, only time.

Lots of time allows you to do things like take a trip to New Zealand for six months. You know, ‘how could you just do that’, you know, what’s the worst that can happen? But the other thing that I think is important and I don’t want to preach here, but money is something we can control….we can either make more
of it, we can make less of it…we can spend it, we can save it, we can gather it, we can steal it, we can build it, we can grow it….time, we really don’t know what we have. This may be the last ten minutes we got…we don’t know. And yet we manage it so poorly. We don’t place the value/emphasis on the time as we do the money. (Mike)

Time was found to influence the experiences in terms of depth and type.

Unplanned encounters and lack of expectations led participants to experiences requiring freedom of unrequited time. For someone like Andrew, he went to visit Myanmar and ended up volunteering in southern Thailand in an animal refuge. The ability to make drastic changes in an itinerary was associated with mindset, time, budget, and an overall capacity to ‘drift’. Time or the concept of time played a role in determining the process or trajectory of a person’s journey.

Backpacking is just this; it gives you so many opportunities because it gives you time. You are not so caught up in just seeing things; do you know what I mean? As a tourist you are on a two week vacation, as a backpacker, you know, you are on kind of an odyssey. (Sue)

For many participants a career direction change was the outcome of their travel experiences. Prior to her backpacking journey through Europe, Kim was employed in corporate America in which her primary goal was to climb the career ladder. Following her journey, she saw her career trajectory as self-focused and as a result of her backpacking was pursuing what she considered more altruistic work in the non-profit sector. While Mike was self-employed, his journeys created awareness of the possibilities in making backpacking an integral part of his lifestyle through changes in his business approach.

Ultimately what I would like to do is have my business set up, where I could have someone look after it for three months out of the year. I would like to travel in December, January and February. I would like to be married and go with my
spouse and my kids. And go to a third world country and volunteer for three
months and find different routines. And ultimately on top of that I would love to
take high school kids to a third world country to experience, and give them a
backpack and say here is a map, meet us up here, let them be close enough, but let
them have that experience because I think every American should go somewhere
for six months or a year, to do something, to give them a perspective of what we
have.

5.12 Global Awareness

Participants indicated their experiences abroad contributed to their awareness and
understanding of global interconnectedness and its importance. Awareness was created
throughout each of the journeys taken and through each occurring interaction.
Participants indicated their journeys created an awareness of the countries and regions
visited although to what extent and to what degree varied. The variations were dependent
on the duration of time in the countries or region, the interactions had while there, and the
level of immersion encountered. Global interconnectedness was viewed as part of a
person’s worldview in that they were able to conceptualize on what Emma referred to as
a higher level. The higher level of conceptualization she explained can only occur when
one has the tools to bring seemingly disparate events from around the globe into an
integrated framework creating an understanding that events and actions all have their
cause and effects on a global scale. According to Matt:

When you travel to places they become more real to you because you actually,
you meet the people, you experience life there. I don’t know, I feel a greater
affinity to these sorts of places. I read about them in the news and I think about
how events there are affecting people that I know and I don’t know, you think
about world events and how they affect people more I guess. (Matt)

As backpackers, we know how people perceive of America. We know when
people are angry with America, we know when people are receptive to America,
we know when they will defend us and be our friends, say like in Iraq. We know
what the political heartbeat is in those countries and whether they support us in
internationalism and when we are screwing up over and over and over again, they
tell you when you are walking around. You know, the best thing is to talk with
backpackers because they sit around with New Zealanders, Aussies, with wealthy kids from Latin America so you know that they’re the ambassador’s sons. So they know the politics. One guy I met was from Africa and his dad was running a country. You know, and he was backpacking, I got to see the perspectives from all over the world in one little tiny hostel and you get that feel. I came back to America and I knew something was up. I knew that terrorism was going to strike America. (Emma)

All participants perceived the reputation of the United States and its citizens to be viewed by those abroad in a negative light. The adjectives used to define how participants perceived Americans were viewed overseas included arrogant, ethnocentric, overtly proud, conceited, pompous, greedy, wealthy, patriotic, ignorant, and boisterous. Enshrouded in the reputation was the view that when Americans were overseas there was little regard for the cultures visited matched by a lack of interest in the people. Brenda worked and backpacked throughout Europe and from that experience she stated “I guess I walked away with some really embarrassment for my country and our culture as a whole. There is an arrogance, there is a, you know, wait on me first I am an American; there is the sense that Americans are talking louder than anyone else, so those kinds of things which are fairly harmless”.

Pumpkin found herself both critical of America while abroad as well as a defender at times. She found that the perceptions of Americans by those overseas was a reciprocal form of ignorance. “I kept saying like, wow, America sucks because of just different things that I was experiencing or whatever but there were also a lot of times where I felt like I needed to defend America because people’s outlooks were so ‘Jerry Springer’. I mean a lot of people’s experiences of Americans is television and they import just ‘Jerry Spring and ‘Dancing with the Stars’ and all of that kind of stuff”.
Participants perceived lack of interaction with Americans contributed to the created and reinforced images by the media creating a caricature of Americans and American society which was perceived as inaccurate yet not able to be corrected without personal interactions between Americans and those abroad. As Pumpkin stated:

If they don’t interact with us how do they know what we are like? I had a girl tell me specifically that if she met more Americans than she would probably think differently. When she talked to me she said she now knows there are people like me out there and but you’re the minority because you are a traveler and I was like well what’s a traveler? Basically its a backpacker, when we see people backpacking we already know that that goes along with a certain kind of open-mindedness and like you know, mildly positive attitude and kind of a free spirit so there’s kind there’s a whole judgment that goes along with the too which too a whole generalization. She said that traveling Americans are looked at as separate from Americans than Americans as a whole. (Pumpkin)

One of the reasons for pursuing this research was due to the lack of knowledge concerning backpackers from the United States. Their existence in the literature was minimal and while the actual numbers could not be ascertained, the perceptions that backpackers from the United States were minimally represented while on the backpacker trail were expressed throughout the data. As Andrew stated “You meet out of about one-hundred backpackers, one American. It’s ridiculous.” Pumpkin and Greg had similar perceptions:

I actually didn’t run into Americans in that circle, you know in the backpacking circle, but like when I was in Rome there were Americans everywhere but they were tourists, it was all, as soon as I would hit the tourist area there would be Americans. Athens it was the same thing. (Pumpkin)

Less than half of the backpackers I met in Central America were from the United States. I would almost say there were as many Israeli backpackers as there were Americans, although maybe not. Less than half are from the U.S., a lot from
Europe, almost none from Asia. Yeah so I guess Europeans and Israelis make up the majority. (Greg)

Each of these quotes was from interviews with people whose backpacker activities were concentrated in disparate regions of the world. Andrew backpacked through Asia, Pumpkin through Europe, and Greg through Latin America. For Greg, the number of backpackers encountered in Latin America was perceived to be higher than that of Andrew who spent most of his backpacking journeys in Thailand, Myanmar, and Indochina. As noted prior in the dissertation, one of the reasons for the lack of U.S. representation in the backpacker literature is likely influenced by where the data was collected. Few studies have been conducted in Latin America or Europe while the majority were based on data collected in Asia and Oceania. While their perceptions are just that, their observations contributed to understanding the environs in which the backpacker from the United States traveled.

The lack of representation was perceived by some participants to send a tacit message that persons from the United States are disinterested in learning about other countries. This lack of presence in the international arena may contribute, by default, to impressions of America and Americans as being ethnocentric and isolated. With little time for touring, an outcome of limited vacation days, the structure of tours catering to the vacationer were perceived to take time-compression to its limits while few options for venturing outside of the tourist routes where cross-cultural encounters with persons not associated with the tourism industry were likely to occur.

There were few outlets through which the backpackers were able to share their experiences in a way that facilitated dialogue and critical reflection. For most, the
interviews for this study were their first opportunity to critically reflect upon their travels with another person who also participated in the backpacker experience. As overseas backpacking is a relatively obscure form of travel for those from the United States, the ability to locate or connect with others who were perceived to understand the experience was considered minimal.

After sending a copy of the transcript of the interview with Jake, he responded, as many of the other participants did by saying “Having this opportunity to speak with you about my trip has allowed myself to gain an even greater understanding into my trip and myself, and I am very grateful to you for this”. The lack of opportunities to share his experiences in a meaningful way was a common sentiment held amongst the majority of participants. Pumpkin stated “This is pretty much like the first I have had a conversation about it. Isn’t that crazy?” which was similar to Matt who conveyed “there’s not really anyone that you can really connect with about what you’ve done or what you’ve seen or the thoughts that you had because they haven’t had them so they don’t understand what you are talking about”. Andrew concurred:

When you’ve been through the similar experience you can share it only with people who have been through it also. You can’t really explain it well enough to share it with somebody who hasn’t been through it.

Backpacking led participants to varying epiphanies at both the micro and macro levels. Participants indicated that their backpacking journeys were life-changing events in that the experiences changed their outlook on the world as well as themselves. There was self-discovery on one level with advanced societal understanding on another. Upon returning, the journey was viewed as such an experience that the cognitive dissonance
between those who hadn’t participated in a backpacker journey and those who had was too great to attempt to bridge the understanding. Jake spoke of his return and how it wasn’t until a couple weeks after his return that one of his friends asked about the trip, his reply was:

I can’t even talk to you about it. You don’t understand. This was like a fucking experience; this wasn’t like a trip to Hawaii for a week. I mean this was a journey; this was a process of self-discovery. Unless they have been there before and done similar trips, like it’s hard for them to even have been to, and I was scared to even open it up and to have tried to break into that so I didn’t.

You want to share with people but its one of those things you just can’t understand or really appreciate unless you have done it. You know. I think there are a lot of experiences in life where you really have to do it to understand what a great experience it can be. Because so few American travel, or so few of my friends travel…going outside of Ohio is traveling for them they can’t comprehend a passport, twelve hours on a plane, all that type of stuff. So it was difficult to really have people comprehend it or relate to you that’s why it’s nice to find someone else, like yourself, who has done it and knows exactly what you are talking about. (Mike)

The inability to share their experiences did not discount the ability for them to incorporate the experiences into their lives. All of the participants indicated the way they viewed the world as a result of their experiences abroad changed or was influenced. The lessons learned, skills acquired, and awareness created outcomes that arguably had the potential to influence the communities, jobs and relationships to which they returned.

5.13 Theory

Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated “theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon” (p.22). The storyline
presented the interrelatedness of the emergent categories through identifying the process through which participants perceived their worldviews were influenced by the backpacking experience. The categories were: a) worldviews b) awareness, c) the self, d) the other, e) society, f) risk, g) interactions, h) exposure, and i) freedom. At the highest conceptual level was the category of freedom which was central to the process of worldview influence.

The findings of the dissertation indicated that worldviews were perceived to be influenced through freedom to become aware of and influenced by others worldviews occurring through opportunities for cross-cultural interactions during the overseas backpacking experience. Through the backpacking experiences the participants developed the freedom to be more aware of alternative worldviews. Freedom through awareness of their own and others worldviews was the primary outcome from their backpacking experience. The substantive theory emerging from the data was: Shaped over multiple journeys, worldviews are influenced through awareness of other perspectives resulting from interactions that are entered into freely while backpacking.

5.14 Summary of Process

The process through which respondents’ worldviews were influenced began with freedom from society with the resultant outcomes of the backpacker journeys being freedom through awareness is presented in Figure 5.5.
Figure 5.5: Process of Worldview Influence

Through the opportunities and experiences the participants were exposed to ‘the other’ which came in two primary forms. The first came through interactions with the locals of the countries being visited. The second came in the form of interactions with members of the backpacker community. Both types of interactions contributed to the exposure of participants to differing worldviews. It was through the interactions that the backpackers became critically aware of issues influencing their country and the world. They were exposed to views that for many contradicted their own of their own country or of the world. Exposure through interactions challenged the existing worldviews of the participants. Participants walked away from their experiences with a better awareness of the way in which the United States and its citizenry are perceived, the worldviews of people from around the globe, and a better awareness of their own perceptions of the
United States. Their exposure to differing worldviews created levels of awareness and/or understanding that influenced their own worldviews.

The perceived outcomes of the backpacker journeys included an increased level of empathy, awareness, and understanding of the interconnectedness of the world. Participants indicated their sense of self, their national identity, and their place in the world were all outcomes of their journeys. All participants indicated intended or implemented changes in their lifestyles due to their exposure overseas. Their awareness of the United States, through stepping outside of it, created an appreciation for areas of life in the United States that was previously taken for granted. It also provided a means through which to critically analyze the actions of the United States and how they are interconnected on a global scale. Through the backpacking experiences participants indicated moving from a worldview influenced by a single society to a worldview influenced by many societies.

The life journey of the backpacker is one that there are few roadmaps. They took the path least traveled cognizant that their destination was unknown. This was a risk that they were willing to take and in the end, it was the journey, more than the destination that became central in their lives. A backpacking trip in the trajectory of their lives was part of their lives, not perceived as a separate event. Unlike the average American who approaches their vacation weeks as separate from their regular lifestyle, backpackers consider it all part of their life journey. Kate stated “I couldn’t have known when I did all of those things that they would lead me to this place, you know, I think that is part of
what makes backpackers or travelers different in that they are willing to take risks to get
to a different place”. 
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

The purpose of the dissertation was to explore the process through which worldviews are perceived to be influenced through the travel experiences of backpackers from the United States. The question answered was “how are the worldviews of backpackers from the United States perceived to be influenced through their travel experiences?”

Grounded theory can be completed and presented at the descriptive level but in this dissertation it was taken to the conceptual level producing a substantive theory. The results indicated that worldviews were influenced through a process that had freedom at its core as well as freedom as its outcome. Freedom was an over-encompassing concept that bridged the individually emergent categories together and in the process identified the process through which the participants perceived their worldviews were influenced.

Grounded theory was used as there was a dearth of information on backpackers from the United States, a lack of information on the holistic backpacking experience, and it was a process that was being explored. Through the utilization of primary and secondary data, in-depth interviews were analyzed to explore and identify the process through which the participants went through in terms of their worldviews being influenced by their backpacking experiences.

Analysis began at the conceptual level where concepts were splintered from the transcripts and using constant comparison, grouped according to similarities. Axial coding provided further substance to the emergent categories through identifying the
properties, dimensions, and subcategories of each category. Constant comparison led to the identification of nine (emergent) categories and it was in selective coding that the core category was identified. Selective coding identified freedom as the core category which without it the discovered process would not occur. Freedom was central to why the participants backpacked, it was central to the experiences while backpacking, and it was central to their returning home. To fully understand the process it was necessary to understand the context from which the experiences originated, the context in which the experiences occurred, and the context of the outcomes upon returning.

It was perceived by the participants that their worldviews were influenced through a process that included awareness, opportunities, interaction, freedom, risk, and the exposure to others’ worldviews resulting in exposure to their own worldviews. Throughout the process the participants indicated an increased awareness of the United States in terms of how the country and its citizens were perceived which they saw as central to their worldviews. This created awareness in participants regarding why the United States was viewed the way it was and led to self and group analysis of how their worldviews were created and how they influenced their perspectives on the world. Self-reflection occurred as a result of exposure to differing worldviews that occurred through interactions with other backpackers as well as with the locals of destinations visited. Group analysis occurred during interactions with other backpackers while on the road.

Furthermore, the backpacking journeys were perceived to free them from the tacit constraints associated with exposure to one worldview. Their perception was that through exposure to other worldviews created and awareness in them that freed them from
thinking in ways that had been learned and reinforced through their societally created worldview. Emancipation from one worldview was a freedom the participants indicated was an outcome of their journeys. Freire (1970) was at the forefront of emancipatory education advocating for its use to be a means to liberation from oppression. Degrees and types of oppression exist and for this dissertation, it was the oppression that occurred through not being aware of other worldviews and making choices emanating from a monocultural perspective. It is argued that this may have been an accepted and successful mode of operandi in the past but with globalization it is perceived to be a barrier to operating in an interconnected world. The backpacking experience was perceived to liberate the participants from the oppression created by the societal institutions responsible for creating and reinforcing societal worldviews.

Through a process of distancing themselves from the social contract of the United States the participants became aware of other worldviews, their own worldviews, and the reciprocity between the two. The backpacking journey required freedom from society and the expectations placed on them as members of their home society. Backpacking offered an arena in which they were freed of the social contract of home and became aware of other worldviews. Awareness was created through opportunities that required risk taking, mobility, and vulnerability. Further requirements included trust, openness, discomfort, dependency, time, and patience. It was through this mode of operandi that opportunities for interactions surfaced in which cross-cultural exchanges occurred. It was during those exchanges that participants perceived their worldviews were influenced. As an outcome
of their journeys, their worldviews were influenced resulting in an awareness of their own worldviews as well as those of others.

Participants’ views of the United States were influenced through exposure to differing views of the United States, by those residing out the United States. Participants perceived people overseas, and other backpackers, as genuinely curious about the United States partly attributed to a sense of confusion and frustration over the political positions of the American people. One of the primary topics of discussion while abroad was about politics which instilled an awareness of ignorance in many of the participants. They came to realize that many people they interacted with abroad knew more about their country than they did. There was also an awareness of the perceived ignorance of American but that perceived ignorance was found to be reciprocal. Participants indicated that although discussions about politics may have indicated an awareness of that topic, generalizations about the American public were perceived to be garnered through the media.

More interaction between the population of the United States and those overseas is needed to help overcome reciprocal generalizations, stereotypes and ignorance. Participants in this dissertation indicated that it was through their interactions with other nationalities that they were able to learn about their own as well as the others worldviews.

6.1 Advocating for the Backpacker Experience

The United States progressed as a society partially due to its freedom and encouragement to explore and discover new areas during the pioneer days. The backpackers of today are not unlike those pioneers in the sense that they are out in the world exploring and discovering the unknown. As the world becomes increasingly
interconnected, what was once foreign becomes local. As a society we need to encourage people to pursue overseas experiences that are independent in nature and that include cross-cultural interaction. This is an idealistic scenario but one that occurs in other societies of the world indicating that it is possible as a society to encourage long-term independent international sojourns. The outcomes on the society to which they return may outweigh the drawbacks.

Through the backpacking experience participants indicated they were better able to see interconnectedness between countries and societies. As stated, the ability to understand one’s country was perceived to be increased through stepping outside of it. The participants indicated upon their return that they were more aware of the United States and its place in the world. Most questioned certain aspects of society as their experiences abroad instilled an awareness of the ways in which events around the world were reported in ways that were steeped in bias thus creating an awareness of how their worldviews were shaped and influenced via the media.

Participants indicated they sought out varying sources for their news upon returning stateside as they were newly aware of the potential biases. Their understanding of the influence of the media on worldviews has arguably turned them into critical readers and potentially better informed citizens. The most important outcomes of the backpacking journeys were perceived to be the skills the participants brought back to their communities and country, the self-efficacy instilled through the journeys, and the overcoming or awareness of ignorance or ethnocentric views of the world. The benefits to society come in many different forms and while many of the outcomes are neither
tangible or quantifiable, their influences on a society would arguably contribute to a
different milieu than without.

6.2 Education

This dissertation approached the study from a perspective that the backpacking experiences was a form of experiential education. Learning is at the core of the study as the influencing of worldviews is a learning process. Kolb and Kolb (2005) indicated learning was the process of creating knowledge through relearning what has previously been learned. Hartree (1984) indicates that all adult learning theories, which the theory produced here is part of, should include how adults learn, what they learn, and why they learn. Merriam (1987) indicated there are no universally accepted adult learning theories while the attempts at adult learning theory can be grouped into three categories: those focused on adult learner characteristics, those focused on the adult life situation, and those focused upon changes in consciousness. The substantive theory fell into the third category, changes in consciousness.

Backpacking is arguably a form of experiential education in which worldviews are influenced. The emergent theoretical model supports arguments by Scott (2003) who stated that “there is a transition from a social influence external to the individuals to a social influence internal to the individuals” (p.277). As the participants indicated, they became aware through their journeys of the socially constructed worldviews they harbored through exposure to others worldviews. This was viewed as a freeing experience through which they became empowered to critically reflect on their worldviews in relation to others worldviews.
The backpacker experiences were viewed as freedom to evaluate their worldviews from a perspective that hadn’t previously existed. Freire (1970) argues that freedom from oppression occurs through education which the backpackers indicated occurred. Most participants re-evaluated their careers and their place within society. Furthermore, they became aware of the community and country in which they lived resulting in awareness of both positive and negative aspects. Scott (2003) stated it is the individual within a society that changes first before a society can change.

Through broader awareness of the world the participants indicated they became more cognizant of ways things could be better and while the majority did not indicate an increase in community activism, they did indicate changes were made to their lifestyles and modes of living. This is an example of bringing the global to the local. Awareness of conservation issues was one of the more prevalent areas of change in the lifestyles of the backpacker’s upon returning to the states.

Participants perceived the education system in the United States as contributing to the formulation and maintenance of worldviews shared by society. Those worldviews were perceived to be disseminating ethnocentric views of the world of which ignorance and arrogance were two characteristics personifying ethnocentricity. While there were critiques of the worldviews produced, the primary emphasis was on the scope of those worldviews. Worldviews were viewed by participants as falling along a continuum with narrow and broad worldviews at polar ends of the spectrum. U.S. society was perceived to be at the narrow end of the continuum. In a globalized world it was assumed that those with broader worldviews will be the ones who lead the world in years to come.
Educational systems have a responsibility to address the globalizing landscape through their curriculum by identifying ethnocentric leanings in teaching practices and curriculum design. Arguably the educational systems reinforce worldviews as well as create worldviews reflecting or creating what is viewed as the mainstream, or status quo. It is the responsibility of educators and the education system to break away from old paradigms used to teach about the world and take the lead in creating citizens that are able to respectfully interact with cultures from around the world.

The creation and reinforcement of worldviews was also perceived to be the responsibility of social institutions including civic, religious, and media organizations. All of these organizations were perceived to have influence over society to varying degrees and differing forms thus there is further need to educate citizens who ultimately become the decision-makers within these organizations. All roads tend to lead back to education.

Education should also look at its mode of teaching and whether the outcomes match the new global paradigm requiring globally conscious citizens that are able to work in cross-cultural situations in which the ways of accomplishing tasks may not be premised on American based models. This includes instilling cultural literacy, geographic and political knowledge, and an overall awareness of the existence of varying worldviews and how those variations interface throughout transactions.

The educational system needs to look at the potential for incorporating backpacking experiences, or similarly independent experiences, into their curriculums. Most of the participants indicated the identification of a career direction or change was an
outcome of their overseas experiences thus if the experience occurred prior to or during their schooling it may influence change in career direction in a more proactive fashion. As Jake stated “Even if you look at the whole educational system, in hindsight I look at my schooling and it taught me to fall in line. It taught me that these are things I wanted to do. I studied business, out of all things”. For Jake, he has left corporate America and found his passion for travel leading him down a career path that may be unorthodox to the status quo but to him, makes him happy. Lenora decided to pursue naturopathic medicine as a result of her overseas experiences. Kim has left corporate America and is pursuing a career in non-profit work where she feels she can make a difference. A portion of the responsibility for producing globally prepared citizens is through the education system.

6.3 Cultural Literacy

For many countries the exposure to and working with foreign cultures is a regular occurrence presumably influencing their worldviews and their abilities to cross cultural boundaries with more ease than those whose worldviews are isolated. According to Andrew, the European Union is a good example as they have many different cultures within its border and the exposure to each others cultures on a consistent basis perceivably creates an awareness of the importance of respecting and understanding other cultures. As one views the topography of the world one can see that the majority of countries around the world border countries that many times have distinct cultures requiring accommodation when dealing with them. For countries that haven’t needed to accommodate other cultures in the past, it is argued that they will find themselves at a
disadvantage in the increasingly global economy (Blinder, 2008). It will require those who don’t have the advantage to seek out ways and means to garner the skills and acumen to work across borders. Cultural literacy is deemed a necessity rather than an option when it comes to the new world order.

As Stewart perceived, cultural literacy is not something that can be taught within a classroom setting. Cultural literacy is perceived to be acquired through interactions in settings outside of the United States for those from the United States. Cross-cultural communication occurs within the United States between differing nationalities but the risks and necessity for becoming aware of and understanding cultural differences does not exist to the extent when someone is communicating within a setting that favors the other party in terms of cultural understanding.

Cultural literacy in this dissertation did not refer to the knowledge of facts but rather its an understanding of a different mode of operandi that needs to be internalized in order to operate within a foreign culture. Cultural literacy is a macro-level skill which once learned should be applicable to most cultural settings. It is based on understanding what to look for in interactions, how to approach situations with cultural sensitivity, and how one’s own cultural traits enter into all cross-cultural situations.

Awareness of other cultures and their different approaches to cross-cultural interactions is considered a basic skill that all workers in the United States should acquire if the country is going to become or stay competitive in the global market. Awareness includes understanding that people approach work and life differently throughout the world and that worldviews are not universal. The competitive edge of American business
is at risk as the benchmarks for the competitive edge arguably shift from knowledge to the knowledge of cultures. Business practices and global relationships and their outcomes are contingent upon successful communication between cultures where the power differential is minimized requiring both sides to understand and work with each other on each others terms. The way of doing business in the United States has the likelihood to offend others and while in the past the business dealings were based on choices, in the global economy there are more choices for everyone in terms of markets and who to deal with. Businesses based in the United States must hire personnel that realize that their way of business is not the only way and those others who may have in the past overlooked practices that weren’t culturally correct, their options no longer require a necessity to overlook these practices.

Business was considered by the participants to be at the heart of United States society and with it, the priorities. The business environment, as Mike indicated, is not perceived to be prepared to do business globally as the approach utilized is perceived to be based on ethnocentric beliefs that the business model used in the United States is the right model. Pearce (1995) viewed this as cultural arrogance, the practice of subscribing to one’s own cultural ways within another cultural environment.

The overseas backpacking experiences of the participants in this study were shown to instill or refine skills needed to navigate global landscapes. Take the mobility through backpacking out of the equation and put in its place the business world one can perceive the global landscape of business will be better navigated by those who are aware
of what to look for and how to work within the terms and cultural expectations of other countries.

Hofstede (1980) is noted for his work in cross-cultural research with his seminal study focused on identifying cultural differences within the international business landscape. He found differences between nationalities in terms of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity. Further research (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) added another area of long-term versus short-term orientation. Viewing the differences in relation to this dissertation, one can see how the backpacker journey exposes participants to other cultural leanings creating an awareness of cross-cultural dimensions that need to be accounted for when interacting with others from other societies. It is argued that exposure to and awareness of cross-cultural communications within settings outside of one’s home country instills skills and awareness that are needed in today’s globalized world.

6.4 U.S. Policy

The United States government should make tourism a priority as it is a means through which global interactions occur and stereotypes are broken down. Policy makers should step away from viewing numbers and look at the extraneous benefits that travel and tourism has the potential to produce. Numbers are useful in their own right but they are not able to paint a reliable picture of the benefits associated with tourism. This dissertation should contribute to understanding this premise that many of the outcomes of the backpacking experiences are immeasurable but no less important.
As earlier indicated, it is the lack of personal interactions between people from varying countries that is perceived to be fuelling misunderstanding and ignorance. The reputation of the United States has been experiencing a period of declining global respect (Pew Research, 2007). The relative lack of citizens participating in overseas travel was perceived by several of the participants in this dissertation to send a message that there is lack of interest in the other.

Furthermore, participants indicated it was not only the lack of presence but for those who are touring overseas, the type of engagement with the citizenry may not be conducive to cross-cultural understanding. Instead they perceived the mass tourism experience as occurring in a bubble disallowing for certain types of interactions to occur. While the participants were found to be influenced by the interactions with locals, it was perceived to occur even more when interacting with the other backpackers.

Identifying where the cross-cultural interactions are occurring during the backpacker experience has ramifications for other studies in different travel settings. For example, the cruise industry has many of the same characteristics as the backpackers in terms of their being together for a short period which may lead to intense relationships that are void of the social contracts subscribed to in their regular places of residence. They are all strangers coming together for an experience which would not be the same without the interactions. Backpackers, or cruisers, are all creating the experience while being part of the experience. Research into the cross-cultural interactions and the possible cross-over characteristics between the cruise experience and the backpacker experience should be investigated.
6.5 Future Research

Although the results of the dissertation cannot be generalized outside of the participants involved in the study, it does provide a base from which to draw on for future studies of backpackers from the United States. As there is little knowledge about backpackers from the United States, there are many directions in which research can proceed. The first area of recommendation is to proceed with comparative studies between backpackers residing in countries that culturally advocate long-term backpacking trips and backpackers from the United States. Since most of the backpacker literature is predicated on studies conducted overseas and on backpackers from overseas, assumptions that have emerged through the years should be tested for on backpackers from the United States.

For example, the backpacker approaches backpacking as a journey rather than a series of journeys. This may be associated with the lack of studies conducted concerning the lead up time to the backpacker journey. Through understanding the travel career backgrounds of the backpackers there will be a better understanding of whether the backpacker journey is a singular event in some cultures while multiple journeys in others. This dissertation found the participants had expansive travel careers which for many included multiple backpacker sojourns. Recommendation is made that the substantive theory be tested and expanded through investigation of other areas in the tourism milieu. The conceptual framework (see Figure 6.6) emergent from this dissertation provides opportunities for further understanding of the backpackers as well as other areas of tourism in which interactions occur.
There is a need to re-conceptualize what a backpacker experience is. The participants in this study indicated their backpacking journeys included times in which studying, volunteering, working, or ‘touring’ were incorporated within the overall structure of their journeys. For some this was a response to the personal inability to travel without focus while for others it was a means through which to gain legitimacy for their travels. The backpacking journey has changed throughout the years due to many reasons thus identifying what the modern-day backpacking experience consists of needs to be empirically identified.

**Intercultural Discourse and the Backpacker Community**

Another area of research that should be pursued is the investigation of the dynamics and intercultural discourse occurring within the backpacker community. Much
of the backpacker literature regarding the influences of overseas experiences on the backpacker assumes that the interactions of primary influence are between the backpacker and communities visited while this dissertation tends to indicate there may be more intercultural dynamics occurring within the backpacker community than external to it. An investigation into the internal dynamics of the backpacker community is being called for.

**Barriers to Participation in the Backpacking Experience**

Research should investigate the barriers for participation in the backpacking experience by potential backpackers from the United States. This dissertation only uncovered the perceptions on behalf of those who backpacked thus understanding the barriers from the point of view of those who haven’t backpacked but have the desire to should be further investigated.

Some of the perceived barriers to backpacking were based upon societal expectations of following a pre-determined life trajectory. The trajectory was perceived to leave minimal freedom to pursue the backpacking experience which leaves the question of how one’s employability is impacted by their overseas journeys. Instead of embracing the skills learned and the global outlook garnered, there is evidence in this study that industry in the United States may not view the backpacking experience as a benefit to employers and instead may be viewed as a detriment to employability. Further research needs to be conducted on how hiring managers or human resource departments view overseas experiences in terms of the returning backpacker’s employability and the perceived skills they bring to the table because of their experiences. Alongside research
into hiring issues is the issue of what skills companies perceive to be needed to navigate the new global business environment and how those skills correlate with the ones backpackers acquire during their experiences.

**Backpacker to Tourist**

As the vast majority of participants had been tourists prior to being backpackers, the transition from one form of travel to the other was indicated to be difficult. Since it was outside the scope of the study this process of transition was not pursued. The backpacker literature had not previously indicated that backpackers were originally tourists but this may be a unique characteristic of the backpackers. There is a need to investigate the process through which the transition occurs, and why.

**Backpacker Lifestyle**

The backpacker literature has researched backpacking from a single journey vantage point but what this study has indicated is that backpacking was considered by the participants a series of events occurring throughout their overall travel careers. This is an areas that needs investigation as this may be a unique aspect of backpackers from the United States or it may be something that has been overlooked in the literature. There is a need for longitudinal studies of the backpacking experience focusing on the types of experiences. As indicated in this study, most of the participants indicated prior experiences studying, working, traveling, or living abroad. Does one form of a experience lead to another?
Backpackers and Sustainability

Pearce (2008) made the recommendation that backpacker studies and sustainability studies are ripe for marrying. In the conceptual piece he focused on sustainability in general terms and then progressed to identifying a potential area of research focused on the intersection of backpacking and sustainability of businesses. It fails to pursue to the route of sustainable practices that are brought back to the backpackers home upon completion of their travels. The participants in this dissertation indicated that their awareness of alternative practices while abroad were incorporated into their lifestyles upon returning home.

There is a need for longitudinal research in this area that further identifies the full spectrum of practices and lifestyle changes occurring upon returning home. Ideally this would involved a longitudinal study indicating what changes occurred, to what extent, and for how long. This would simultaneously provide further understanding of the outcomes of the backpacking journey(s).

Domestic Backpacking

This dissertation focused solely on backpackers from the United States engaging in backpacking experiences overseas. There is a backpacking industry within the United States that has yet to be investigated in the literature. Understanding backpackers from overseas visiting the United States- their experiences, interactions, opportunities, and views of the United States- are all potential avenues for research. This dissertation has opened up the research trek into investigating backpackers from the United States thus idealistically creating an awareness of the global backpacking community amongst
tourism policy officials and developers. Demand for backpacking accommodation in 2007 outstripped supply indicating backpacking is not solely the domain of the overseas milieu.

6.6 Limitations

The dissertation presented a substantive theory which delineates its usability to only the participants involved in this study. Further, the number of participants does not permit generalizations to be made outside the scope of the study. While the recruitment and participation was open to all backpackers meeting the previously delineated requirements, participants were homogenous in terms of race. As there is little knowledge about the backpackers from the United States, it is not understood whether backpackers are a homogenous lot or whether the means through which recruitment was conducted may have inadvertently resulted in every participant being Caucasian.

The recruitment process was restricted by limited resources associated with conducting in-depth interviews. While the participants were from the Midwest and Northwest which may have influenced the results, the fact that most participants had lived in multiple states in multiple areas of the country helped offset the geographical isolation of the data collection activities.

Data collection occurred in a socio-cultural environment in which events of the time period may have influenced the responses to questions. It is likely that if the same study was conducted in the same way at a different time that differences would arise reflecting the socio-cultural climate of that period in time. Grounded theory is discovered in a certain time and place which can never be returned to.
Data analysis was conducted by one person where multiple raters would have increased the trustworthiness of the study. In grounded theory studies there is an element of trust needed both in trusting the way in which the analysis occurred as well as the way the analysis was presented. The trustworthiness was increased in this study through member checking. If the participants of a grounded theory see themselves in the story line and relate to it then the accurate representation becomes a sign of validity.
APPENDICES
## Appendix A: Review of Backpacker Literature

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<th>Year(s) of Data Collection</th>
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<th>Mean Age</th>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>Northern Australia - Hostels</td>
<td>&lt;10%</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
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### Appendix A: Review of Backpacker Literature (continued)

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<th>Location</th>
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<th>Data Collection Method</th>
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<td>New Zealand-Auckland and Christchurch hostels</td>
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Appendix A: Review of Backpacker Literature (continued)

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N/A = Not Available
Appendix B: IRB Consent Form

Consent Form For Participation in the Research Study
Clemson University
Transformation Through Overseas Backpacking

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mark Kanning and Dr. William Norman. The purpose of the research is to explore self-transformation attributed to the overseas backpacker experience. Your participation will involve an in-depth interview probing into your backpacking experiences. The interview will delve into your overall backpacking experiences including the reasons and motivations for travelling in this style, the experiences you had while abroad, and the outcomes and integration of those experiences into your everyday life.

The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately one hour.

Risks and discomforts

There are certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. In particular you will be asked about both positive and negative experiences you may have had while overseas as well as your return-home. The potential for recall of negative events is a concern. As your participation is completely voluntary, if at anytime you would like to stop the interview, please indicate this and the interview will immediately cease. You may also ask during the course of the interview to skip questions or topics you may not be comfortable with.

Potential benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. This research may help us to understand the impacts overseas backpacking experiences have on the individual and the possible contribution to the home society in general.

Protection of confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study. The principal investigator and co-investigator will be the only two people having access to your actual identity.

In rare cases, a research study will be evaluated by an oversight agency, such as the Clemson University Institutional Review Board or the federal Office for Human Research Protections, that would require that we share the information we collect from you. If this happens, the information would only be used to determine if we conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.

This form is valid only if the Clemson University IRB stamp of approval is shown here:

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY
IRB CONSENT FORM
APPROVED 3/14/08
EXPIRES 3/13/09

Page 1 of 2
Appendix B: IRB Consent Form (continued)

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study. The interview will be taped for accurate transcription and the tapes will be stored for three years. If you elect prior to, during, or after the interview to not be taped, please indicate as such.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. William Norman at Clemson University at 864.656.2060. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of the Institutional Review Board at 864.656.6460.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature: ____________________________ Date: __________

A copy of this consent form should be given to you.

This form is valid only if the Clemson University IRB stamp of approval is shown here:
Appendix C: Recruitment Ad

Headline: Have you backpacked (budget traveled) overseas?

A study is being conducted on the overseas backpacker experience and we are looking for volunteer participants from the United States to discuss the motivations to travel as a backpacker, the experiences had while on the road and the impact the experience(s) have had on life once back home. The interviews are approximately one hour in length, are held at a café convenient to you, and are entirely voluntary. You must be 18 or over, from the United States, and self-identify as a backpacker. If you have any questions or are willing to participate, please contact Mark at mkann69@hotmail.com. Thank you.
Appendix D: Grand Tour Questions

*These questions were utilized only as a general guide to the interviews and were supplemented by other questions dependent upon the direction of each individual interview.

Please explain what a backpacker is.

What was the impetus for you to travel overseas in the backpacker style?

Tell me about your backpacking experiences overseas from the first time you backpacked until now.

What are the highlights of your backpacker experiences abroad?

What areas of your life do you perceive to have been impacted by your overseas backpacking experiences?

Do you currently self-identify as a backpacker?

What did you learn from your overseas backpacker experiences that you think you may not have learned if you hadn’t have traveled, or traveled in this style?

Do you think you personally have changed as a result of your backpacking trip(s)?

Do you think backpacking is for everyone?
## Appendix E: Participant Travel Careers

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REFERENCES


Popay, J., Rogers, A., & Williams, G. (1998). Rationale and standards for the systematic review of qualitative literature in health services research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 8, 341-351.


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